SERMONS

TO

YOUNG WOMEN,

By JAMES FORDYCE, D. D.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

CAREFULLY CORRECTED.

LONDON:
Printed for S. CROWDER, C. WARE and T. PAYNE.

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SERMON VII.

On Female Virtue, with Intellectual Accompliſhments.

1 Tim. ii. 8, 9.

I will——that Women adorn themſelves with Sobriety.

Prov. iv. 5, 6, 8, 9.

Get Wiſdom, get Underſtanding.—Forſake her not, and ſhe ſhall preſerve thee: love her, and ſhe ſhall keep thee.—Exalt her, and ſhe ſhall promote thee.—She ſhall give to thy head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory ſhall ſhe deliver to thee.

IN a country like this, where there is certainly a native fund of good ſenſe, where ſciences and arts are widely cultivated, where works of genius and taſte in every kind are allowed to abound; is it not ſomewhat ſtrange, that the com-

mon ſtyle of converſation ſhould be ſo little inſtructive or entertaining? How ſeldom do we fall into a company, in which we learn any thing uſeful, or hear any thing whatever above the rate of the multitude; ſuch as low jeſts, vulgar conceits, incoherent diſputation, or impertinent tattle? How very ſenſible does a ſenſible man come away from the viſit of an evening, delighted with his manner of ſpending it? One who has converſed only with a ſmall circle of ingenous friends, will hardly conceive what a frivolous, what a piteous thing, the ordinary run of company appears to an intelligent by-ſtander.

The favourite communications of men of pleaſure are beyond deſcription corrupt and grovelling, with ſcarce any diverſity. Thoſe of gay aſſemblies are the quinteſſence of dulneſs and diſſimulation; except only that the firſt is ſometimes tinctured with a few ſprinklings of ſmartneſs, and the laſt always conceal-

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ed under the colours of civility. As to the buſy, and learned, and the grave; the greater part are no ſooner releaſed from their reſpective purſuits, than they throw themſelves looſe into a liſtleſſneſs of diſpoſition, that wanders with impatience in queſt of public diverſion, or diffuſes itſelf in private through the vacuity of idle talk: as if there were no medium between ſerioufneſs and folly, or as if people could not find relief from the ſtretch of application, in the agreeable unbendings of moderate amuſement and rational diſcourſe. In ſhort, if we want to find a converſation enlivened with variety and ſpirit, enlightened by intelligence, and tempered by politeneſs, we muſt ſeek for it amongſt a few men, who join ſentiment to knowledge, and a few women, who join knowledge to vivacity.

That the number of theſe ſhould be ſo ſmall, compared with the untaught and the ungoverned Many, is ſurely matter

of lamentation. To what ſhall we chiefly impute it? To what elſe, but to that whirl of diſſipation, which, like ſome mighty vortex, has ſwallowed up in a manner all conditions and characters? That the young indeed ſhould be often carried down the ſtream, till they ſink into inſignificance, is not much to be wondered at, how much ſoever it is to be regretted. But alas! they do not always ſtop there. From what is trivial, how eaſy the tranſition to what is mean! How quick the deſcent from thoughtleſſneſs to vice! Nothing, perhaps, requires better ſenſe, or a ſtricter guard, than to trifle without being fooliſh, or to be frolickſome without ſin. They that would hold faſt their righteouſneſs, and not depart from the decorum of their character, cannot be too careful to regulate their converſation, as well as their conduct, by the great law of reflection, and in the hour of gaiety itſelf, not to loſe ſight of wiſdom. But how ſhould this be expected, where the mind is wholly unimproved,

proved, where no internal reſources are ſecured in the days of youth; but all is left to nature neglected by education, and warped by faſhion, or to the ſcanty ſupplies which company, news, and accidents afford?

What I would now therefore labour is, with the help of God, to perſuade you, my fair auditory, to enrich and adorn your underſtandings with ſuch attainments, as ſhall render you not only leſs dependant on external amuſements and empty gratifications, but more ſuperior to every thing corrupting and dangerous: ſuch as ſhall entertain and edify you at the ſame time, enable you to enjoy ſolitude, and qualify you to ſhine in converſation, even without deſigning it, to inſpire a mixture of complacence and reſpect; in fine, to unite decency and ſenſe with mirth and joy. Thus would I ſtill endeavour to promote that ſpirit of Chriſtian Sobriety which our Apoſtle inculcates, and by the ſame

means contribute to the felicity and dignity of your ſex.

The paſſage from the Proverbs, which I have read to you, by way of a ſecond text, requres no commentary; and indeed I know none that could do it juſtice. As it is, it muſt ſtrike you at once with its ſimplicity, tenderneſs, and ſublimity. The Wiſdom or underſtanding, ſo beautfully perſonified by Solomon, is no doubt to be conſidered chiefly as repreſenting Religion, which is certainly the higheſt exerciſe of our rational powers. But I ſee no reaſon for conceiving it to repreſent that only. In many parts of his writings it is manifeſtly uſed to ſignify Mental Improvements, in the proper ſenſe of the phraſe; nor is there any thing ſaid of it here, which will not in one degree or another hold true of theſe, when under right direction; beſides that, in fact, the cultivation of thoſe powers to every valuable purpoſe, is unqueſtionably a duty which we owe to their

their author. That the exhortation is addreſſed by our inſpired writer to a male ſcholar, whom in the manner of eaſtern teachers he calls his ſon, makes no eſſential difference in the ſpirit of his doctrine, as I hope will appear from the ſequel.

The degree of thoſe Intellectual Accompliſhments which your ſex ſhould aim at, I pretend not to determine. That muſt depend on the capacities, opportunities, and encouragements, which you ſeverally enjoy. With regard to all theſe however, this may be ſaid in general, that they are better, and more than many of you ſeem ſollicitous to improve.

As to the firſt indeed, I ſcruple not to declare my opinion, that Nature appears to have formed the faculties of your ſex for the moſt part with leſs vigour than thoſe of ours; obſerving the ſame diſtinction here, as in the more delicate frame of your bodies. Exceptions we readily

readily admit, and ſuch as do the individuals great honour in thoſe particular walks of excellence, wherein they have been diſtinguiſhed. But you yourſelves, I think, will allow, that war, commerce, politics, exerciſes of ſtrength and dexterity, abſtract philoſophy, the abſtruſer ſciences, and the like, are moſt properly the province of men. I am ſure thoſe maſculine women, that would plead for your ſharing any part of this province equally with us, do not underſtand your true intereſts. There is an influence, there is an empire which belongs to you, and which I wiſh you ever to poſſeſs: I mean that which has the heart for its object, and which is ſecured by meekneſs and modeſty, by ſoft attraction and virtuous love.

But now I muſt add, that your power in this way will receive a large acceſſion from the culture of your minds, in the more elegant and poliſhed branches of knowledge. When I ſay ſo, I would by

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no means inſinuate, that you are not capable of the judicious and the ſolid, in ſuch proportion as is ſuited to your deſtination in life. This, I apprehend, does not require reaſoning or accuracy, ſo much as obſervation and diſcernment. Your buſineſs chiefly is to read Men, in order to make yourſelves agreeable and uſeful. It is not the argumentative but the ſentimental talents, which give you that inſight and thoſe openings into the human heart, that lead to your principal ends as Women. Nevertheleſs, in this ſtudy you may derive great aſſiſtance from books. Without them, indeed, your progreſs in it will be partial and confined. Neither are you to attach yourſelves wholly to this ſtudy, important as it is, and grateful as you may find it. Whatever kinds of reading may contribute to your general improvement and ſatisfaction, as reaſonable beings deſigned for ſociety, virtue, and religion, will deſerve your attentive regard

gard. Suffer me to enter a little into the detail. And,

First, I would obſerve, that Hiſtory, in which I include Biography and Memoirs, ought to employ a conſiderable ſhare of your leiſure. Thoſe pictures which it exhibites, of the paſſions operating in real life and genuine characters; of virtues to be imitated, and of vices to be ſhunned; of the effects of both on ſociety and individuals; of the mutability of human affairs; of the conduct of divine providence; of the great conſequences that often ariſe from little events; of the weakneſs of power, and the wanderings of prudence, in mortal men; with the ſudden, unexpected, and frequently unaccountable revolutions, that daſh triumphant wickedneſs, or diſappoint preſumptuous hope; ——the pictures, I ſay, which Hiſtory exhibites of all theſe, have been ever reckoned by the beſt judges amongſt the richeſt ſources of inſtruction and entertainment.

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On both accounts, we would alſo recommend books of Voyages and Travels; a favourite ſtudy of the celebrated Mr Locke. How amuſing to curioſity! How enlarging to our proſpects of mankind! How conducive to cure the contracted prepoſſeſſions of national pride, and withal to inſpire gratitude for the peculiar bleſſings beſtowed upon our country; to excite on one ſide pity towards the many millions of human beings left by myſterious heaven in ignorance and barbarity, and to beget on the other admiration of the virtues and abilities diſplayed by numbers of theſe under all the diſadvantages that tend to darken and overwhelm them.

Here too we would mention Geography, as cloſely connected with both the former; as often uſeful in converſation; and in which a competent ſkill may be acquired with little application, but much amuſement.

Theſe ſeveral ſtudies, to which may be added the principal facts, or great outlines of Aſtronomy, are beautiful; and they are improving. Some of them preſent the moſt intereſting ſcenes; all contain the moſt pleaſing diſcoveries. They open and enlarge the mind; they dilate and humanize the heart; they remind us that we are citizens of the univerſe; they ſhow us how ſmall the part that we fill in the immenſe orb of being. Amidſt the amplitude of ſuch contemplations, ſuperfluous trifles ſhrink away; wealth and grandeur "hide their di-"miniſhed heads;" a generous ambition riſes in the thoughtful mind, to improve itſelf to the all-inſpecting eye of Him to whom none of his works are indifferent, but to whom thoſe only can be acceptable, that under the uncertainty and imperfection of ſublunary things, ſeek their ſecurity, happineſs, and glory, in doing well.

Permit me to aſk, whence it proceeds that

that ſtudies like theſe are neglected by the generality of your ſex? Is it becauſe they are not calculated to inflame the fancy, and flatter the paſſions; or becauſe to reliſh them to purpoſe, requires ſome degree of ſolidity and judgement? ——But did not I ſay, that there were thoſe amongſt you who are no way deficient in theſe latter qualities? I did; and therefore pleaſe myſelf with the hope, that the hints now offered may imprint conviction on ſuch where there has been an omiſſion, and encourage perſeverance where there has not.

As to works of imagination, it is allowed on all hands, that the female mind is diſpoſed to be peculiarly fond of them; and ſurely where blended with inſtruction, ſo as to be rendered more immediately ſubſervient to it, they have a particular claim to your attention. In this view, we muſt not forget to recommend Fables, Viſions, Allegories, and ſuch like compoſitions, where Fancy ſports

under the controul of Reaſon; Dramatic Writings alſo, where truth of characters and purity of thought are preſerved; (of theſe laſt how inconſiderable the number!) Poetry of all kinds, where a ſtrict regard is paid to decorum, but chiefly of the ſublimer forms, where Nature, Virtue, Religion, are painted and embelliſhed with all the beauty of a chaſte yet elevated imagination.—What a field is here opened within the reach, and adapted to the turn of female faculties? What a profuſion of intellectual ornament is ſpread before you, for memory to collect, and for reflection to work upon! How many ſprightly, delightful, and lofty ideas do here paſs before the mental eye, all dreſſed in the brighteſt colours! How ſtrangely inexcuſable muſt thoſe be, who complain at any time of want of amuſement, when the genius and invention of every illuminated age have taken ſuch happy pains to ſupply the nobleſt!

I ſay nothing now of Novels and Romances, having had occaſion to ſpeak of them ſo largely in a former diſcourſe. But I muſt not omit to recommend thoſe admirable productions of the preſent century, which turn principally on the two great hinges of ſentiment and character: joining deſcription to precept, and preſenting in particular the moſt animated ſketches of modern manners, where the likeneſs is caught warm from life; while the powers of fancy, wit, and judgement, combine to expoſe vice and folly, to enforce reformation, and in ſhort but ſpirited eſſays to convey the rules of domeſtic wiſdom and daily conduct. I need not here name the Spectator, or thoſe who have followed him with various ſucceſs in the ſame attack; many of them ingenious, ſome of them maſterly writers. How much are both ſexes indebted to their elegant pens, for a ſpecies of inſtruction better fitted perhaps than moſt others of human device, to delight and improve at the ſame mo-

ment; ſuch is its extent, its diverſity; its familiarity, its eaſe, its playful manner, its immediate reference to ſcenes and circumſtances with which we are every day converſant!

Works of this kind are peculiarly calculated to allure the lively and the gay, who are not yet delivered over to licentiouſneſs. Hardly indeed will girls for inſtance, who mean no ill, but whoſe fancies are all alive and reſtleſs, ſubmit to have their underſtandings attired at Wiſdom's glaſs; if lovely forms and ſmiling images are not often reflected from thence, to detain the eye, and intereſt the heart. In fact, none of you, my dear hearers, can be too well acquainted with thoſe approved maſters of life, thoſe able teachers of decorum, thoſe ſingularly ſucceſsful painters of truth and morality. Let me adviſe you to dwell on their pictures, to imbibe their ſentiments, to repleniſh your minds with that inexhauſted fund of

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ſtories and examples which they have furniſhed. You cannot fail of improving under ſuch tutors. They too will provide you with a touch-ſtone, by which to judge of other writings, and while you are ſearching "for knowledge as for hidden treaſures," to ſeparate between the pure ore and the alloy.

I ſhould not on this occaſion do juſtice to your ſex, if I did not ſay, that ſuch books as thoſe laſt mentioned are, in a particular degree, proportioned to the ſcope of your capacities. Of this I am certain, that among ſenſible women I have diſcovered an uncommon penetration in what relates to characters, an uncommon dexterity in hitting them off through their ſeveral ſpecific diſtinctions, and even nicer diſcriminations, together with a race of fancy, and a fund of what may be ſtrictly termed Sentiment, or a pathetic manner of thinking, which I have not ſo frequently met with in men. It ſhould ſeem, that

Nature, by her liberality to the female mind in these respects, has seen fit to compensate what has been judged a defect in the point of depth and force; and a real defect I believe it is, if estimated absolutely. If estimated with a due regard to the design and formation of the sex, it ought to be considered as no defect at all.

I have already hinted, that to men and women the Almighty has allotted very different provinces, on the filling of which with suitable kinds of ability and excellence depends, under his conduct, the proper perfection and welfare of each. In all I have said therefore, or may yet say, concerng Female Accomplishments, I would be still understood by you as recommending what is refined in study, and useful in the milder modes of life; not what is profound in the former, or of no material advantage in the latter This hinders not however, but that those ladies, whom Nature, not confining herself to her

her cuſtomary operations, has endowed with any ſignal ſtrength of genius, may, if favoured alſo by their ſituation, give way to that original bent, by proſecuting ſevere ſtudies to every prudent length. I ſay, to every prudent length. For ſhould they puſh their application ſo far as to hurt their more tender health, to hinder thoſe family duties for which the ſex are chiefly intended, or to impare thoſe ſofter graces that give them their higheſt luſtre; nothing, I think, can be more apparent, than that, in ſuch caſes, they would relinquiſh their juſt ſphere, for one much leſs amiable, and much leſs beneficial. But neither from this, nor from what was advanced immediately before, does it follow, that, in what relates to the acquiſitions of the mind, women in general may not purſue ſtudies that are ſolid, as well as entertaining; which leads me to add,

In the next place, that the moſt obvious branches both of Natural and Moral

Moral Philoſophy ſhould engage ſome portion of your time. That they are ſo ſeldom, and ſo ſlightly thought of, you muſt allow me to ſay, is a melancholy reflection. Does Creation, thro' her infinitely extended, and infinitely diverſified ſcenery, diſplay innumerable wonders? Have theſe been traced with ſkill and accuracy, by many learned, and many laborious hands? Are they laid open to you, and almoſt preſſed upon you from every quarter? For of Natural Philoſophy I conſider Natural Hiſtory as a part.—And can you with a giddy eye turn away from this glorious ſpectacle to gaze on the meaneſt ornament of beauty, or the ſilliеſt pageant of vanity; thus poorly, not to ſay impiouſly, proſtituting that admiration which ought to be conſecrated chiefly to the works of your all-peſect Creator?

Are the great eternal obligations of Conſcience, the maxims of a wiſe and worthy behaviour, the duties you owe

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to the Supreme of Beings, to your fellow-creatures, and yourſelves, the rules neceſſary for the government of your minds in particular, or for the management of thoſe that may be hereafter committed to your care; are theſe mighty conſiderations, unfolded and enforced as they have been with equal clearneſs and eloquence by various writers—are theſe, I ſay, matters of ſo little concern with you, that the adjuſting ſome pretty circumſtance of dreſs, or the ſettling ſome fooliſh party of pleaſure, ſhall be preferred in almoſt every caſe of competition?

Here, I muſt confeſs, it is difficult, to repreſs the riſings of indignation. Here I cannot deny, but the feelings of contempt, mixed with thoſe of compaſſion, are in ſome danger of baniſhing the favourable ideas we entertain of your ſex, when ſeen in happier points of light. ——For ſhame, Ladies, let not this reproach reſt on you any longer. Haſten

en to vindicate your reputation from the infamy of impertinence and nonſenſe. Be ambitious to demonſtrate by the moſt ſubſtantial proofs, that you are capable of better things than the placing of a ribbon, or adjuſting an head-dreſs; than the glittering in an aſſembly room, or prattling at a tea table. Be all ardour to emulate thoſe excellent ones of your ſex, who, without affecting to deſpiſe any thing that is innocently female, diſcover in their converſation among their friends, a mind devoted to wiſdom, and ennobled by kowledge.

The duty and advantage of reading the Scriptures, with a few books of the moſt ſerious and devotional ſtrain, I will take another occaſion to conſider. —— But, I think, I hear you exclaiming, that, though God has given you the capacities of intellectual improvement, men have denied you the opportunities of it. Let us therefore proceed to examine how this matter ſtands, which was,

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Our ſecond point. If your complaint is well founded, you are certainly objects of pity, inſtead of blame. If the men, jealous of dominion, do realy ſeek to depreſs the women by keeping them in a ſtate of ignorance, they are ſurely guilty of equal cruelty and meanneſs. But though the complaint be a very common one, and very popular with your ſex, I muſt take the liberty of ſaying, that it appears to me without any foundation adequate to the bitterneſs with which it has been made, or to the keenneſs with which it has been propagated.

That your minds are often much neglected at home, that they are neglected perhaps yet more at many Boarding-ſchools, we readily admit, and heartily regret. But are you nevertheleſs deſirous of knowledge? Then, what ſhould hinder you from attaining it? Is there any law or ſtatute prohibiting you, under ſevere pains and penalties, to read or to think

think, if you are ſo minded? Books you have, or may have, on every ſubject that is proper for you. This is not a country where theſe are ſcarce; where Friendſhip, if permitted, will not ſupply, or where Benevolence, if aſked, will not lend them. You will be pleaſed to remember too, that the price of one expenſive gown, or of one ſhining toy, will at any time furniſh a little library of the beſt authors. Nor does it appear, that you are at a loſs to find as many plays and novels as the moſt inſatiable avidity can devour. But in fact, there are few young ladies, who are not tolerably provided with books uſeful as well as amuſing; and in thoſe who are not under the neceſſity of earning their bread, it is both an idle and unthankful pretence, to plead that they want either opportunity or leiſure for any one ſtudy befitting their ſex.

Not to ſpeak of the time, that with ſo much propriety they might, and that, for

for ſo many reaſons, they ought to redeem from endleſs viſitings and other follies; what is there to prevent their reading alternately to one another, when cuſtom or conveniency engages them at work together? Such an exerciſe would not only enlarge the ſtock of ideas in each individual, but alſo preſent materials on which their minds might operate, with an energy quickened by mutual exertion. "As iron ſharpeneth iron, ſo "doth the face of a woman her friend." You cannot, my fair pupils, be offended, that, to ſuit the quotation to the argument, I ſhould here read Woman for Man. How ſmoothly have I ſeen thoſe hours ſteal away, which were thus employed in a little ring of intelligent females, all ſweetly ſollicitous to improve and be improved by each other!

By this means too may be acquired a very valuable and pleaſing accompliſhment, that of reading well; and to this cauſe, I preſume, it is to be aſcribed,

in part at leaſt, that there are not a few women who poſſeſs it in no contemptible degree, and that there are ſome who read delightfully. It is likewiſe, in ſome meaſure, probably owing to that fine feeling of nature and of ſentiment, which may be ſuppoſed to reſult from the delicacy of their organs. If, in the exerciſe I ſpeak of, they are often deficient where force and vehemence are requiſite, to that very delicacy it is obvious to impute it; and alſo perhaps to their running too commonly into a monotony, which their teachers have not taken ſufficient pains to correct.

Having touched on this head, I will take leave to remark by the way, that nothing, as I apprehend, can be more erroneous than to begin the ſtudy of what may be termed the Art of Reading, with poetry chiefly. For by the flow and harmony of the numbers, a learner is carried inſenſibly into the repetition of thoſe muſical tones, that chance

chance to ſeize the ear with particular delight; from which the voice, once got into the ſame ſtrain, cannot without a ſtruggle perſuade itſelf to break away: a principal ſource of the evil of monotony, where it has not been contracted by bad example, and where the ſenſe of an author is underſtood or attended to. Where it is not, the proper emphaſis cannot be expected.

Now to prevent or remedy this prevailing evil, the moſt likely method, I conceive, would be to begin with frequently reading aloud thoſe productions in proſe of which the ſtyle is plain and eaſy, ſuch as unadorned Narrative, ſhort Stories, familiar Epiſtles; but principally thoſe that approach neareſt to the language of converſation, ſuch as Dialogues, and the beſt Dramatic Writings; mixing for a conſiderable time nothing that is verſified, and endeavouring to ſupport the voice with firmneſs and ſimplicity, till you have formed a

of ſo doing. Then by ſlow and almoſt imperceptible progreſſion, you ſhould advance to what is more varied, rhetorical, and raiſed: ſuch as Allegories, Orations, Moral and Religious Diſcourſes, and Eſſays of the pathetic kind, together with the moſt beautiful and elevated parts of Holy Writ; keeping to theſe, till your voice has acquired flexibility, expreſſion, and energy. After repeated and patient efforts in this way, you may proceed with ſucceſs to reading and reciting pieces of poetry, in different ſtyles; ſetting out with thoſe where there is leaſt, and riſing gradually to thoſe where there is moſt of the tender, the impaſſioned, and the ſublime. Need I add, that all this ſhould be practiſed in the frequent hearing, and under the kind animadverſion, of an experienced judge?

But, perhaps, you think the practice too laborious and troubleſome. Do ye? Go, thou trifler, and be aſhamed of thy folly,

folly,—To neglect the ſtudy of thy native Engliſh, the ſkilful uſe of which, joined to ſentiment and knowledge, would render thy converſation charming; and yet contentedly to puzzle thy ſilly head with learning a little imperfect French, which it is a hundred to one if ever thou ſhalt have occaſion to uſe—— How prepoſterous and futile! To the language laſt-named I am no enemy: I only blame its occupying ſo large a place in the female education of this country. For ladies of rank the faſhion has made it neceſſary. But what can be more ridiculous than to ſee our city girls, not excepting the daughters of plain tradeſmen and honeſt mechanics, taught for years together, at great expence, a ſmattering of that, which, ſoon after they leave the Boarding-ſchool, is generally forgotten; while they are left ignorant of the ſuperior beauties and juſt pronounciation of their mother-tongue?

I mentioned the exerciſe of Reciting

verſes. With relation to this, I would only ſay, that I do not wiſh a young woman to indulge it in any company, that is not very private and choſen indeed; how much ſoever it is to be deſired, that ſhe ſhould ſtore her memory with ſome of the moſt ſelect ſentiments, and ſtriking deſcriptions, from the beſt writers both in verſe and proſe.

On this laſt particular I am led to obſerve, that, for a diſengaged hour, there can be few occupations of greater entertainment or utility, than that of imprinting on the mind thoſe paſſages from any good author, which happen to pleaſe and affect more than ordinary; either by repeating them often at the time, till they are got by heart, or by writing them down, or ſometimes by doing both. The advantages of ſuch a practice are ſufficiently apparent. Would it be one of the leaſt, think ye, that the attention of her who was thus employed, would be often turned from viewing and admiring her perſon

perſon or dreſs in the mirror, to the contemplation of Truth and Virtue, and fixing their fair and venerable image in her ſoul?

Beſides the opportunities of mental culture now enumerated, I muſt not forget to add, that in all probability there are few young ladies who are not, or who may not be, acquainted with ſome perſons of both ſexes, endowed alike with worth and capacity, that would take the higheſt pleaſure, by their converſation and counſel, to aid them in the purſuit of knowledge; which brings me to conſider,

In the laſt place, your complaints of want of encouragement to that purſuit. Who are they then that ſeek to diſcourage you? I have read of fooliſh mothers, that would not ſuffer their daughters to read, leſt they ſhould dim the luſtre of their eyes, or ſpoil the bloom of their complexions. But I have never met

never met with one, that ſeriouſly carried her folly ſo far. On the other hand, I have known parents not a few, who, though they had little or no taſte for knowledge themſelves, would yet ſpeak with the utmoſt ſatisfaction of a girl that was fond of her books.

But perhaps, my little friend is afraid, leſt the men ſhould ſuſpect her of being, what the world ſtiles in deriſion, a learned Lady. Indeed? Is this then a character ſo very eaſily acquired, that you are in danger of it the moment you emerge from the depth of ignorance, and begin to think and ſpeak like a reaſonable being? You are over haſty in your apprehenſion. A Learned Lady is by no means a creature that we run the riſk of being often ſhocked with. For my own part, I have never ſtrictly ſpeaking ſeen ſuch a one; and when at any time I have met with what approached to that character, I muſt profeſs, I found nothing to excite terror.

But

But poſſibly you mean a ſmatterer in learning. There, indeed, I join with you in wiſhing you may never incur the imputation.

That men are frighted at Female pedantry, is very certain. A woman that affects to diſpute, to decide, to dictate on every ſubject; that watches or makes opportunities of throwing out ſcraps of literature, or ſhreds of philoſophy, in every company; that engroſſes the converſation, as if ſhe alone was qualified to entertain; that betrays, in ſhort, a boundleſs intemperance of tongue, together with an inextinguiſhable paſſion for ſhining by the ſplendor of her ſuppoſed talents; ſuch a woman is truly inſufferable. At firſt, perhaps, ſhe may be conſidered merely as an object of ridicule: but ſhe ſoon grows into an object of averſion. Be aſſured however, that, where a character ſo unnatural appears, it is not the effect of too much knowledge, but of too little. The deep river flows

on

on with a noble ſtillneſs, while the ſhallow ſtream runs babbling along. Suſpicious of her own deficiency, the Pedant we deſcribe ſuſpects leſt you ſhould diſcover it; but inſtead of learning caution from that conſciouſneſs, ſhe ſtrives to dazzle you with the little ſhe does know: Or elſe, what is more probable, elated with that which to her circumſcribed view appears great, her vanity cannot reſtrain itſelf from diſplaying it on all occaſions; when farther progreſs, and higher ground, would have taught her modeſty, by ſhowing her immenſe regions of truth yet untravelled, of which ſhe had no conception before.

In fact, we find that the beſt ſcholars of either ſex are the leaſt oſtentatious. It will ever be ſo, where erudition is accompanied with judgment, and matured by reflexion. Take care to preſerve ſober ſenſe, and unaſſuming manners: far from giving diſguſt by literary attainments

tainments to any perſon whoſe regard is of moment, you will give pleaſure to every thinking man and woman of your acquaintance. I am even inclined to believe, that, when in converſation you claim no kind of pre-eminence, but inſtead of pretending to teach are willing to learn, inſtead of courting applauſe are ready to confer it, inſtead of proudly directing are content quietly to follow the current of diſcourſe, every creature living will be delighted with your deportment, will liſten with attention, and even deference, to one who has thus learnt, that the nobleſt improvement of ſuperior knowledge is ſuperior humility.

Now and then indeed there may be an inviduous female, who cannot bear to ſee herſelf outdone. But that is a circumſtance, which will only add to your exaltation; while every one elſe will be tempted, for the ſake of mortifying her, to pay the more reſpect to you. Be this as it may, the notion that letters are apt to generate ſelf-conceit,

becauſe

becauſe it cannot be denied that the abuſe of them has often done ſo, will in thoſe of the leaſt candour or diſcernment ſerve to heighten eſteem for her, who conſiders an excellent underſtanding as only next in value to an excellent temper. If on any occaſion it ſhould happen, that the fooliſh or the worthleſs of one ſex, or of the other, are prejudiced againſt a young woman for diſcovering, though without parade, a cultivated mind, what then? Is not the ſingle plaudit of a real judge ſufficient to outweigh a whole theatre of others?

But you will aſk, do we not often ſee handſome idiots complimented and carreſſed by thoſe men from whom better things might be expected; while the moſt accompliſhed women in the ſame company ſhall be over-looked, if deſtitute of perſonal charms? The fact cannot be diſſembled, and far be it from me to juſtify ſuch partiality. There is in beauty

beauty a magic, which certainly does enchant for a time the generality of beholders: But this will by no means excuſe the injuſtice of neglecting merit in thoſe who want that advantage. Let it be remembered however, that the triumph of their rivals is commonly, like that of the wicked, ſhort. The ſpell on which it is founded is ſoon broke. Men, at leaſt of any ſignificance, are ſeldom long in recovering their ſenſes. The admiration raiſed by "a ſet of features, or the tincture of a "ſkin, is often, by the witleſſneſs of the poſſeſſor, thrown down in an inſtant. The witchcraft of a fair outſide is always diſpelled by familiarity. Nothing can detain affection or fix eſteem, but that kind of beauty which depends not on fleſh and blood. The leaſt degree of underſtanding will be diſguſted at petulance, caprice, or nonſenſe, even in the faireſt form. External allurements are continually loſing; internal attractions are continually gaining. A beautiful

character " is as the morning light, that " ſhineth more and more unto the per- " fect day." Senſe, ſpirit, ſweetneſs, are immortal. All beſides, " withers " like the graſs." The power of a face to pleaſe, or indeed to diſpleaſe, is diminiſhed every time it is ſeen. When appetite does not predominate, and appetite cannot predominate always, the ſoul will ſeek a ſoul; it will refuſe to be ſatisfied with any thing leſs. If it finds none, in vain ſhall the brighteſt eye ſparkle, in vain ſhall the ſofteſt ſmile entice. But if a mind appears, and, wherever it reſides, a mind will appear, it is recognized, admired, and embraced; even though the eye ſhould poſſeſs no luſtre, and ſmiles ſhould at the moment be baniſhed by ſorrow.

" Mind, mind alone, bear witneſs earth and heaven,
" The living fountain in itſelf contains
" Of beauteous and ſublime! Here hand in hand
" Sit paramount the Graces ——— "

I cannot conclude this diſcourſe, without taking ſo fair an opportunity of addreſſing

dreſſing myſelf to ſuch of the men, as, by directing their praiſes of young women wholly or chiefly to an outward appearance, turn the attention and ſolicitude of the little idols ſo ſtrongly that way, as often to occaſion the neglect of thoſe inward perfections which can alone give them value. Have you forgotten, Sirs, that what they ſee you admire; and hear you applaud, they will be induced to think moſt worthy of admiration and applauſe; and that on it of courſe they will beſtow their whole or their chief care? If you, who ought to aſſiſt their judgments, and animate their reſolutions, in what relates to the conduct of life, are accuſtomed to pay your main homage to their perſons, their perſons they likewiſe will adore. Beauty with them will conſtitute Merit; and every other endowment will be employed as a handmaid to dreſs that, if not as a pandar to ſell it. Accordingly I fear, that to your ſcore muſt be charged many errors of the ſex, often

leſs juſtly imputed to them. Thoſe errors, I am ſure, it would become you to prevent, or to correct at the ſource, by pointing out to them what, in your wiſer hours, you want and wiſh them to be; and what, when they are, will not fail to captivate love, to command veneration, and to add permanence to both.

Conſider, I beſeech you, how honourable it will be for you, inſtead of corrupting the fair, to mend them; inſtead of perverting their ideas, to lead their taſte to knowledge and elegance, to worth and delicacy, to humility and meekneſs; things which in your inmoſt ſouls you cannot but prize, whenever you meet with them in an amiable woman, and of which you are ſecretly convinced the abſence cannot be compenſated by any advantages of form or feature, any decorations of faſhion or ſhow. How much nobler the power to ſave, than the power to deſtroy! How much ſweeter the praiſe of being eſteemed men of virtue and ſentiment, the friends

and

and patrons of the ſex, advocates for their true intereſt, and zealous to promote it, than that of being looked upon as ſmooth-tongued courtiers, or good natured triflers! To flatter a giddy girl into good humour, or even tenderneſs, by telling her perpetually how handſome or how fine ſhe is, requires no capacity. Every empty fellow, every frivolous dangler, every wretch of a paraſite, can do the ſame. But to engage the eſteem of a woman of principle and diſcernment, to preſerve that eſteem, and even to inſure in her breaſt a ſilent teſtimony, that you have contributed to eſtabliſh this principle, and to improve this diſcernment —— is triumph indeed! Thoſe coxcombs that in truth make no diſtinction, but yet would perſuade every young thing they ſee, that her face, her ſhape, her dreſs, her air, ſurpaſs all thoſe of all her ſex; and after throwing her into ecſtaſies of ſelf-complacence, go away

and laugh to their companions—are a deteſtable race.

Concerning many of you, my friends, I hope better things. Nor do I mean by aught I have ſaid, rigidly to preclude every degree of compliment in converſation with the ladies. I am for commending with moderation, what is commendable; for acknowledging with prudence, what is pleaſing. Young minds ought to be encouraged. In every young mind there is ſomething good. An agreeable appearance is certainly engaging. Truth will never deny it: Courteſy will readily own it. But then under the ſhelter of kind approbation, ſalutary counſel may be admitted. Wiſdom may be found a welcome gueſt, when introduced by affection——I was going to ſay, that vanity may be ſucceſsfully turned againſt itſelf. But why ſhould the love of honeſt praiſe be deemed vanity? Even tell your female friends, that you do eſteem

eſteem them for whatever in their characters is eſtimable. Tell them without exaggeration, but generouſly at the ſame time, what that is. Deſcribe with complacence the qualities and accompliſhments, which you have ever held moſt truly attractive, which it is in their power to acquire, and which it will be their glory to poſſeſs. If they have beauty, be not afraid to add how alluring it appears, when illuminated by ſenſe, and arrayed by virtue. If they have none, remind them freely that ſenſe and virtue have often times borne away the palm from the fineſt figure that ever flattery deified, if deſtitute of thoſe living and laſting graces.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

On female Virtue, with Intellectual Accompliſhments.

1 Tim. ii. 8, 9.

I will——that Women adorn themſelves with Sobriety.

Prov. iv. 5, 6, 8, 9.

Get Wiſdom, get Underſtanding.—Forſake her not, and ſhe ſhall preſerve thee: Love her, and ſhe ſhall keep thee.—Exalt her, and ſhe ſhall promote thee.—She ſhall give to thy head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory ſhall ſhe deliver to thee.

ON the ſubject of Intellectual Accompliſhments much remains to be ſaid. At a time when they are neglected by ſo many women, who, if they read at all, read only for a little tranſient amuſement, they cannot ſure, conſidering

conſidering their importance, be inculcated too ſtrongly. They may, it is true, be perverted. What is there of the greateſt moment, that may not? Becauſe works fit only for the veil of darkneſs have been wrought in the face of day, does it follow that "light is not "ſweet, or that it is not a pleaſant thing "for the eyes to behold the ſun;" or that benefits innumerable are not derived to mankind from the reſplendent luminaries of nature? Were thoſe extinguiſhed, what were this world? And what, think ye, muſt be that mind, where all is enveloped in a night of ignorance? "For the ſoul," ſays Solomon, "to be without knowledge is not "good." Of ſo great a defect do we not ſee every day the unhappy conſequences in the conduct of both ſexes?

With regard to yours, my beloved ſiſters, I am willing to impute much of the folly and miſery that involve multitudes of women, not to their being altogether unacquainted with the main outlines

outlines of their duty, traced by the hand of God on every heart a little more or a little leſs clearly; but to their want of that reliſh for knowledge, and of thoſe attainments in it, which certainly tend to exclude many temptations, and to fortify againſt the influence of others. On this account, I muſt again and again urge the culture of your minds. Your virtue, your ſobriety is intimately concerned in it. That ſhall be my Firſt argument: its connection with your dignity or figure in life ſhall be my Second; and my Third ſhall turn on its uſefulneſs to promote your comfort and felicity: conſiderations ſurely that merit your attention. I pray God to bleſs them for your improvement.

I begin with ſhowing, That the Intellectual accompliſhments briefly delienated in the preceeding diſcourſe will have a tendency to exclude many temptations. To what dangerous reſources are the generality of young women driven by the love of pleaſure and amuſement, ill directed

rected! Having formed no taſte for thoſe that ariſe from reading, writing, agreeable reflections, and rational converſation, their paſſions, naturally ardent, fly without previous examination to every object which flatters that ardour by promiſing all the vivacity of joy. In this career, it is not difficult to conceive what ſnares may entrap beauty, and what habits may corrupt innocence. When firſt entered on, it is very poſſible that no evil is intended. For that very reaſon none is ſuſpected; and this confidence betrays. When vice begins to unveil her daring front, conſcience is ſtartled, and ſhrinks from the monſter. But curioſity, opportunity, importunity, the flatteries of ſelf-deceit, the dreams of youthful fancy, the bias of faſhion, the fear of banter, ſhould they venture to oppoſe; all theſe concur with the powers of darkneſs in miſleading the poor unexperienced adventurers: and to courſes, of which the bare idea filled them at a diſtance with horror, familiarity

arity at laſt reconciles them; if not ſo far as to procure real or thorough approbation, far enough however to engage perſeverence attended with a feeling of remorſe that gradually abates, till they are often inextricably entangled in a thicket of guilt and wretchedneſs.

What numbers of miſerable beings are now loſt there, whoſe firſt deviations were occaſioned by nothing more than a deſire of eſcaping from inactivity or dullneſs, to ſomething that might divert or employ! But had an early love of books prevented this languor, by furniſhing at home a harmleſs and varied entertainment, ſuch as was adapted to give play even to the livelieſt imagination, there had been evidently much leſs inducement to ſeek it abroad; and many a ſoul that is at this day hurrying on to deſtruction, might probably, in that caſe, have been walking with Wiſdom and Happineſs. Nor would I have you think, that I ſpeak of thoſe only, who have broke through all the reſtraints of decorum

rum. There are a thouſand tracts leading to ſin and woe, beſides that infamous road to which the hand of public cenſure is pointed.

The ſuppoſing, indeed, ſo wide a diſtance between the extremities of guilt and its intermediate ſtages, is among the moſt natural miſtakes of a mind deſtitute of knowledge. Of this internal light one of the great advantages is, to throw ſuch illumination on virtue and vice through all their eſſential, and even many of their minute diſtinctions, as to make them be diſcerned with clearneſs, and felt with conviction; while there riſe up to view nameleſs beauties in holineſs, and nameleſs deformities in ſin, that paſs unheaded by the dim inattentive eye of an underſtanding uninformed. This delicacy of perception alone, in a breaſt not yet corrupted by evil cuſtom, will create a ſalutary dread of many purſuits and connections, that often prove exceedingly hurtful. In general, it ſeems

obvious, that by how much more we are acquainted with our duty, by ſo much the juſter apprehenſions we have of its importance, and by ſo much the greater capacity for performing it.

But the grand uſe of an affection for knowledge, as to the point before us, is that of preventing idleneſs and diſſipation, which it certainly does where ſuch affection is properly regulated; and this cannot be repeated too frequently, nor preſſed too powerfully. The human mind was made for action. In virtuous action conſiſts its higheſt enjoyment. It will not, it cannot continue long unemployed, eſpecially during the ſprightly ſeaſon of youth. Even feeble age finds its principal delight in recollecting the days of juvenile activity, and rehearſing the enterprizes which diſtinguiſhed that happy period. But now there are many young ladies, whoſe ſituation does not ſupply a ſphere of domeſtic exerciſe ſufficient to fill up that

part

part of their time, which is not neceſſarily appropriated to female occupations and innocent amuſements. What then ſhall they do with it, or with themſelves, if books are not called in to their aſſiſtance? Purſue the enquiry of your own minds. Many of you, alas! are but too well qualified to purſue it, can but too well imagine the inſipid, fooliſh, and pernicious expedients, which under thoſe circumſtances are daily practiſed for killing time and thought.

In truth, it cannot appear ſurpriſing to ſee thoſe who have no notion of internal entertainment, hunting after faſhionable diverſions. For my part, I am only ſurpriſed, when thoſe who from a better education have had opportunities of knowing what an extent and diverſity of ideas and imagery, of information the moſt grateful to the mind, and of deſcription the moſt affecting to the heart, may be found in a well choſen library; when ſuch, I ſay,

do yet prefer to all this the hallowneſs and dullneſs, which inſeparably attend a perpetual train of public amuſements, or private viſiting.

But I am inclined to hope, that a preference ſo unjuſt and unwiſe, is ſeldom made by thoſe laſt mentioned; that they who have taſted the pleaſure of converſing intimately with the beſt authors living and dead, and from this happy commerce have contracted an intellectual turn, will not be often tempted to mingle with the unthinking crowd. When, for the ſake of unbending the mind more entirely, and avoiding any unneceſſary air of ſingularity, they do at any time join it; the ſame turn will contribute to preſerve them from the ſeduction of vice and folly.

It is not to be denied, that from the head to the heart the diſtance, in a moral reckoning, is often immenſe; that between ſublimity of idea and elevation of

of conduct there is no neceſſary connexion; that the fineſt ſentiments and the groſſeſt paſſions have been obſerved to meet in the ſame mind; that our Firſt Mother was betrayed by the pride of knowing; and that the height of capacity in Lucifer only increaſed the fall of that ſon of the morning. All this is true. But ſhall we hence infer, that the deſire of knowledge, well directed, and wiſely applied, is not likely to produce any worthy impreſſions?

Imagine two young ladies, of whom, one delights in elegant and virtuous ſtudies, the other in faſhionable idleneſs. Will you ſay, that the former is equally in danger with the latter of deſcending to vulgar, or to vicious pleaſures? As familiarity with perſons of refined manners may be expected to communicate a correſponding refinement; is it not probable, that intimacy with the moſt beautiful compoſitions will, in the ſame way, impart a beauty to the ſoul? And

is there not ground to believe, that this will make her who is poſſeſſed of it, aſhamed to allow herſelf in any thing unhandſome; even as it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that ſhe who has been genteelly bred, will diſdain the thought of a low behaviour? Or, becauſe the natural tendency of things is ſometimes croſſed, will you ſay that it is therefore deſtroyed? Have you not heard, that a rule is not overthrown, but rather confirmed, by exceptions? Young people, we know, are often corrupted by bad books; and have we not likewiſe known them improved by good ones? She muſt be depraved and ſunk indeed, who from contemplating the majeſty and happineſs of Virtue in the beſt examples, together with the meanneſs and miſery of Vice in the worſt, that hiſtory or poetry holds up to view, can go away, and in her own deportment conteract immediately the feelings of love and admiration for the one, of contempt and abhorrence for the other, which objects of this kind muſt unavoidably

unavoidably awaken. She again, who ſhould not perceive herſelf prompted to a prudent and amiable demeanour, or guarded againſt the contrary, by thoſe pictures of diſcretion and excellence on one hand, of levity and futility on the other, with which ſentimental and moral writers abound, muſt be abſolutely void of decency, or of reflexion. To inſtance but in one ſubject more; ſhe muſt be wholly given up to trifles that can purſue them with the ſame fondneſs, after having her imagination raiſed and all her faculties expanded, by thoſe wonderful repreſentations of the works of God, which are contained in many books of Philoſophy and Geography, Voyages and Travels.

But now repreſent to yourſelves a young lady, whoſe underſtanding is utterly uncultivated. What is there to correct her paſſions, or to govern her practice; What is there to direct her in her choice of companions, and diverſions; to guard her againſt the follies of

of her own ſex, and the arts of ours; in ſhort, to prevent her falling into any or every ſnare, that is or may be laid for her? Suppoſe her to have received from Nature the ſeeds of common ſenſe, Do theſe require no attention to raiſe them? Or is this moſt uſeful plant to be reared without aid of experience? But where, or how, is that to be obtained by a girl? Muſt ſhe diſcover the wiles and wickedneſs of libertines by converſing with them? Muſt ſhe learn how to defend againſt danger by having run into it; or how to avoid the blandiſhments of pleaſure by having felt its bitterneſs? By men the knowledge of the world is commonly gathered in it? Very different from the ſituation of women is theirs in this reſpect; and they, it is to be apprehended, often purchaſe a little wiſdom at a great expence. By entering into any company that tempts, engaging in any freindſhip that offers, or accepting of almoſt any creature that happens to court them, it is but too well

known

known what miſchiefs a number of our young gentlemen incur. A female that acts upon the ſame plan is loſt; and ſhe who would effectually eſcape diſhonour and remorſe, reproach and ridicule, muſt endeavour to know the world from books, to collect experience from thoſe who bought it, and to ſhun miſconduct herſelf by obſerving the calamities it has occaſioned to others. But I ſaid,

Secondly, That Mental Acquiſitions were of importance to your dignity and figure in life. Conſider, my dear ſiſters, how many women are leſſened, in a diſcerning eye, by their extravagant attachment to dreſs and toys, to equipage and oſtentation; in a word, to all the gaudy apparatus of female vanity, together with the endleſsly ridiculous, no leſs than frequently fatal conſequences, which theſe draw after them. Conſider how trite and childiſh ſenſible men muſt neceſſarily deem thoſe arts that are daily practiſed on our ſex by mul-

multitudes of yours; not to ſpeak now of worſe enticements. Conſider the emptineſs, inſipidity, and inelegance of their converſation—how contemptible! Above all the reſt, conſider the jealouſy and envy, the mean ſuſpicion and ſhameful malignity, to which we have ſeen the female breaſt enſlaved, and frequently on the ſlighteſt foundation, frequently on no foundation at all—— how debaſing! Now from theſe evils the love of letters, with that liberal caſt of thought which they are naturally calculated to give, would, I am well perſuaded, be one powerful preſervative.

A young woman, ſo worthily and ſo happily engaged, will not find leiſure for unneceſſary trifles and idle parade: or if it were poſſible ſhe ſhould, a conſcious ſuperiorty will enable her very much to deſpiſe them. Endowed with her powers of pleaſing, ſhe will not find herſelf reduced to the little tricks played off by many of her ſex. In the company

pany of her friends, ſhe muſt ever appear with peculiar advantage. In other companies, where ſhe leaſt thinks of appearing, an agreeable tincture of intelligence, an eaſy correctneſs of expreſſion, if it is proper for her to take any part in the diſcourſe, will ſtill diffuſe themſelves. Perhaps too ſhe will deliver herſelf with a graceful, though modeſt freedom. Her letters, or any other compoſition that may fall from her pen, will be read with particular eagerneſs and approbation; her correſpondence will be prized as an honour, and her acquaintance courted as a priviledge; attention will hang upon her words, and reſpect follow in her train. Such a woman will know how to entertain and charm, beyond the duration of an hour. Is it carrying our ideas too far to ſay, that, in all probability, an emanation of ſentiment and ſpirit will be viſible in her air and manner, that her mind will radiate in her eyes? It may not always, but it will often. With regard to thoſe vile

paſſions

paſſions before mentioned, which ariſe from rivalſhip in dreſs, beauty, and the like; as ſhe has learned to value herſelf on better things than the laſt, the firſt by conſequence will not have the ſame hold of her ſoul; beſides that, I ſuppoſe her to have acquired an enlargement and generoſity, which nothing but books, or knowledge of the world, or the principles of genuine piety, can inſpire.

Of the two latter the operation is in ſome reſpects defective, without the concurrence of the former. How improving ſoever an acquaintance with life may be found on ſome accounts, there are inſtances, in which it will hurt the feelings of the heart; if theſe are not from time to time ſoftened and cheriſhed by the more ſoothing repreſentations of men and things given by authors of a candid ſtrain. Then it is to be remembered, that, in matters of religion, a zeal without knowledge has been often deſtructive, and is always hurtful. But

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ſuppoſe no ſuch zeal to take place; ſuppoſe that meekneſs, as it certainly ought, makes a part, and a large one too, of the pious character in any woman; yet without the ſeaſonings of a good underſtanding, without ſomething of that ſalt and poignancy which are derived from writers of taſte and learning, there will ariſe, in repeated intercourſe, a ſameneſs and a flatneſs that muſt diminiſh eſteem, though they may not deſtroy affection. Add to this, that, on a variety of ſubjects, ignorance will inevitably produce a poorneſs and vulgarity of thinking, which, to perſons whoſe views are nobler, will be rather diſguſtful.

In truth, the acquiſitions we recommend would prevent or cure moſt of thoſe little prejudices, and little paſſions, which often hurt the ſex in the opinion of their beſt friends. Not to inſiſt on what has been mentioned more than once, their aſtoniſhing prepoſſeſſion in favour of public places, greatly owing

to their want of ſomething rational and agreeable to employ them at home; what ſhall we ſay of that abſurd partiality, which they frequently ſhow for well dreſſed fops, who pretend indeed to admire them, but are too frivolous and conceited to admire any, in good earneſt, but themſelves? Surely a well informed underſtanding would enable women to deſpiſe ſuch inſignificance; and to give the preference to merit, and modeſty, in a plain habit.

To what ſhall we chiefly impute that female curioſity, which has been ſo long, and in moſt inſtances, ſo juſtly a topic of ſatire? It is poſſible, that women could ſhow that amazing eagerneſs to be acquainted with every minute particular in the life, character, dreſs, fortune, and circumſtances of others, did they poſſeſs a fund of domeſtic entertainment and liberal converſation? The original principle, by receiving a right direction, might certainly be turned into a rich

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ſource of improvement, that would ſpread increaſing luſtre around you.

That aptneſs alſo to be aſtoniſhed, alarmed, affrighted at trifling accidents, imaginary evils, or natural events ever ſo little unuſual, which, when carried far, and frequently recurring, makes a young lady appear quite ſilly, is often the effect of ſhallowneſs. Ignorance is prone to admire; and admiration readily ſwells into a paſſion, or ſinks into a panic: Whereas an enlightened mind is ſeldom wrought up to ecſtaſy, and ſeldom overwhelmed by terror.

Again, were women to contemplate the fatal conſequences of avarice, ambition, vanity, luxury, the violence of love, and the fury of revenge, as appearing in the ruin of families, the devaſtation of provinces, and the fall of empires, is there not reaſon to hope, they would be leſs dazzled with thoſe objects, and leſs affected by thoſe occaſions, that are apt

to foment ſuch propenſities——propenſities, which, though in their caſe not ſo conſequential to others, are yet many times extremely degrading, as well as pernicious to themſelves.

And then, that ignoble diſpoſitionto ſcandal, deemed by many one of the characteriſtict blemiſhes of your ſex—you could not poſſibly indulge it ſo often, were you furniſhed with a ſufficient compaſs of obſervation and ſentiment, on ſubjects much more innocent, and ſurely not leſs intereſting.——Not leſs intereſting, did I ſay? How, in the name of God, are you concerned with the faults of thoſe with whom you have no connexion? or what call have you to remark upon them, farther than may be neceſſary to guard yourſelves or others againſt their contagion, or their conſequences? Are you vain of the wit and vivacity which you diſplay, or fancy you diſplay, on theſe occaſions? Ah! What ſuperior honour would

candour,

candour, ſweetneſs, and ſelf-correction, reflect upon your characters! But thoſe qualities are the offspring of ſelf-knowledge, and a comprehenſion of what is truly beautiful and becoming in life. Let me perſuade you, my beloved pupils, with all your improvements, "with all "your gettings, to get" theſe two eſſential parts of "underſtanding." Benefits innumerable will reſult from them: This amongſt the reſt; they will prevent I know not what affectations, that daily expoſe many pretty fools of your ſex.

But why be at ſo much pains? You are under no kind of apprehenſion on thoſe points; confident that, whereever you appear, you cannot fail of commanding regard; ſure that, whenever you are pleaſed to open thoſe lips, which you have heard ſo frequently praiſed, every ear will be attentive, and every heart allured. Indeed? Are you very confident, very ſure?—— Take care you be not diſappointed. It

is my duty to tell you, whether you believe it or no, that I have known many a man, who, in the company of women, has applauded that which he inwardly deſpiſed; and with hypocritical rapture liſtened to nonſenſe, where the ſpeaker was handſome. Obſequiouſneſs and adulation will attend on youth and beauty. But can you be contented with an incenſe ſo cheap; an incenſe offered to a face or to a ſhape alone; an incenſe, that does not riſe from the altar of the heart; an incenſe, in fine, that is laviſhed, with an undiſtinguiſhing hand, on every inſignificant image that happens to be caſt in a regular mold, and coloured with a mixture of white and red? Where alas! is your delicacy? Have you no ingenious pride? Are you ſo very vain, (pride and vanity are different things) ſo very ignorant after all the admonitions you have received, as ſtill to conſtrue flattery into approbation, and ſmiles into attachment? But I intreat you to reflect, When beauty

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and youth are gone, and go they will ——what then? Why, then, all this adulation and obſequiouſneſs will vaniſh with them; and if you are not adorned with attractions more ſubſtantial and durable, into what neglected things will you ſink!

An accompliſhed woman can never become an object of neglect: She muſt always remain an object of diſtinction amongſt her acquaintance. When ſhe was young, ſhe might pleaſe more; but as even then ſhe pleaſed chiefly by her mind, ſhe will therefore continue to pleaſe ſtill. The diſcerning Few at leaſt will diſcover in her, beauties which neither the inroads of age, nor the ravage of ſickneſs, can deface. When "declined into the vale of years," ſhe will ſtill, from the ſuperiority of her character, ſtand forth an exalted figure. Senſe and capacity, joined to worth and ſweetneſs, are extempted from the condition of all things elſe; which

which is to loſe their influence, when they loſe their novelty. "The orna-"ment of grace which Wiſdom will "give to thy head," will not appear with leſs real luſtre, when infirmity ſhall cauſe that head to ſhake. "The "crown of glory which ſhe ſhall deli-"ver to thee," will in Reaſon's eye receive new dignity from grey hairs; or rather, according to our inſpired author, thoſe "grey hairs are" themſelves "a "crown of glory, being found in the "way of righteouſneſs."

Do you know a woman far advanced in life, but yet farther in virtue and underſtanding, who with mild inſinuation employs them to render wiſe and happy thoſe about her, eſpecially the young; who for ſuch in particular makes every kind allowance, not forgetting thoſe early days, when ſhe ſtood in need of indulgence; who, when her health will permit, takes pleaſure in ſeeing herſelf ſurrounded by a circle of youth innocently

ly gay, condeſcending even to mix in their little ſports, and by a graceful complacency of look, and pleaſing remainder of an ancient humour, to encourage and promote their harmleſs amuſement.——Do you know ſuch a woman? Then ſpeak your opinion freely. Will this youthful circle be in any danger of deſpiſing her becauſe ſhe is old? On the contrary, will they not contend with one another, who ſhall pay her moſt veneration, who ſhall ſtand higheſt in her affection? Can you conceive a character more reſpectable, and at the ſame time more amiable? What is there good or excellent, to which ſhe will not have it in her power to win them?

And now think of a decayed beauty, who, in the height of her bloom, and the career of her conqueſts, truſted ſolely to that bloom, and never dreamt of ſecuring thoſe conqueſts, ſuch as they were, by any thing more ſolid and abiding. Inexpreſſibly mortified that both

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are at an end, ſhe would fain, if poſſible, keep up the appearance of them ſtill.—How? By conſtrained vivacity, by a juvenile dreſs, by that affectation of allurement and importance, which we ſo readily pardon in the prime of life, but which in its decline is univerſally condemned as aukward and unnatural. Place her in the young aſſembly we have juſt ſuppoſed. There let her endeavour to ſparkle, as in the days of old; there let her lay traps for admiration amidſt the wrinkles of age.——How ludicrous, and how melancholy at the ſame moment! What girl, or what boy of them all, will not be ſtruck with the impropriety? Every mark of decay, every ſymptom of change, will be traced and examined with acuteneſs. No part of her figure will be overlooked, not a ſingle ſlip in her behaviour forgiven: whereas, if warned by the effects of time, ſhe prudently gave up to her juniors all competition of looks and ſhow, and ſtudied only to make herſelf agreeable by her converſation

verſation and manners; there is ſcarcely one of thoſe little critics that would ever reflect upon her years, or that would not be delighted with her good ſenſe, and obliging deportment.——— No, my young friends, nothing can ſave you from contempt at that period, if during this you are not at pains to improve your minds. She who is, ſhall, in one ſenſe, and that the beſt, be always young.

If ſhe continues ſingle, and her ſituation, or her choice, ſhould lead her to cultivate but few acquaintance, amongſt them ſhe muſt ever be loved and valued. If ſhe is married, and to a man of tolerable judgment, with tolerable temper, he will count himſelf happy in ſuch an aſſociate; he will even be proud of thoſe talents in her which do honour to his election. I have ever remarked, that women of capacity and elegance have poſſeſſed the hearts of their huſbands in a degree which

which is not common; I mean, where thoſe huſbands had any worth or diſcernment, You will eaſily imagine, that I ſuppoſe the women in queſtion too wiſe, and too excellent, to affect ſuperiority; or not to give their partners all the credit and conſequence poſſible, on every occaſion. Between men and women there is ſeldom any rivalſhip in what relates merely to intellect; nor are the former ever much hurt by any conſcious inferiority in that reſpect, where the latter do not ſhow themſelves, eſpecially before company, arrogant or pretending.

I muſt not forget to ſubjoin how much the Mental Improvements, now enforced, will contribute to adorn and animate the companion, to direct and dignify the miſtreſs, to accompliſh the mother and the friend, to ſpread a charm over the whole matrimonial ſtate, and to relieve thoſe duller hours that are apt to ſteal on the moſt delightful condition of humanity.

Nor

Nor can I dimiſs this part of the argument, without mentioning what has often appeared to me one very remarkable inſtance, amongſt many that hiſtory records, of the tranſcendant power to captivate and preſerve eſteem, which Intellectual Accompliſhments, worthily exerted, confer upon a woman. It is that of Madam Maintenon, the celebrated favourite and wife of Lewis the Fourteenth.

This monarch, born with ſtrong propenſities to pleaſure, bred in its very lap, indulged from the beginning in all his paſſions, early poſſeſſed of unlimited power, conſtantly accuſtomed to the moſt exquiſite flattery, formerly drunk with ſucceſs and glory, always courted by the female ſex with every art that beauty, wit, or ambition could employ, in his intercourſe with them ſtill addicted to novelty and change—— this very monarch, not yet arived at the age of fifty, in full health, environed with all the

ſplendor of a moſt brilliant court, read in little elſe beſide comedies and novels, finds in the converſation of that lady, whoſe origin was not high, whoſe fortune had been always low, and who was now older than himſelf by ſeveral years—finds, I ſay, in her converſation ſuch innocence, ſuch ſweetneſs, ſuch unequalled charms of taſte and intelligence, as induced him to break off every engagement of a voluptuous kind, and to enter with her into the moſt honourable of all connexions, in which he appears to have maintained his fidelity to the laſt. Madam Maintenon had from her youth improved herſelf by reading, and the beſt company, whom her beauty and talents drew about her, in a country where the ſociety of the women is much more regarded than in this. Lewis was firſt attracted by the extraordinary ſpirit and elegance of her letters; and then abſolutely fixed by her ſentiments, her attention, and her ſubmiſſion. Theſe were a balm to his ſoul, tormented by domeſtic,

domeſtic, perſonal, and political chagrins. In theſe he obtained a relief from that wearineſs and wretchedneſs, which the pomps and pleaſures of the world had ſerved only to increaſe, while they promiſed to prevent or cure them. We do not find, that this illuſtrious lady was fond of faſhionable diverſions: her books and her work were the principal amuſements of her leiſure.

But it is time to proceed to our laſt point, namely, the uſefulneſs of Mental Acquiſitions to your comfort and felicity. It is worthy your obſervation, that the Moſt High, having formed his rational offspring for a happineſs more refined and noble than the indulgence of the ſenſes alone, has wiſely made the gratifications ariſing from thence in a great meaſure momentary. To prolong theſe inferior enjoyments, is the laborious taſk of the ſlaves of appetite and fancy in league with each other. But as it is undertaken in oppoſition to

the deſign of the Almighty, and proſecuted in defiance of his laws, it muſt ever be vain. They only fatigue themſelves in the attempt. From efforts beyond her ſcope and powers, Nature will always recoil. Satiated with external pleaſures, ſhe turns inward. Experiencing there a void, which the whole ſyſtem of matter cannot fill, ſhe is prompted by an innate ambition to aſpire after higher objects. Her ſpiritual faculties, and divine extraction, point her to the world of ideas. From hence, and from what may be called the Commerce of Minds, ſhe wiſhes to derive her chief ſatisfaction. But you will eaſily conceive, that ſuch commerce cannot be carried on to any extent, nor with any variety, without a competent ſtore of the goods proper to it; thoſe, I mean, which experience and reflexion, genius and reaſoning, diſcourſe and memory, have accumulated and laid up in the writings of different ages, as in ſo many convenient repoſitories, for the uſe of

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all who are willing to avail themſelves of this better wealth. Thoſe who are not, muſt neceſſarily labour under much internal poverty. Accordingly, how do they ſtrain to ſupply the needful demands of converſation, when in company; and when alone, how do they ſtruggle to elude, becauſe they cannot content, the craving of the immortal mind! To the want of this proviſion, and the incapacity of ſuſtaining the weight of their own ſpirits preſſing upon them in ſolitude, muſt we not principally impute their impatience for all manner of entertainments, that may help to fill up the painful blanks of time, without any conſiderable expence of that which they can leaſt afford—Thought? But this expident is merely temporary, and extremely imperfect. Diverſion long continued is drudgery; and ſtill the ſoul falls back upon herſelf.

Now, if in the intervals of leiſure you can with reliſh repair to books, you need

never be at a loſs. You may happily avoid, if you will, the toils of reſtleſs amuſement, and the ſighs of immoderate mirth. Excuſe this laſt expreſſion. Have you not ſometimes proved the truth of Solomon's remark, that "even in laugh-"ter the heart is ſorrowful." Have you not now and then perceived a ſigh to ſteal from you, when oppreſſed and exhauſted by frequent burſts of merriment?— If ſhe who is in love with reading ſhould, on particular occaſions, be led into ſcenes of that kind, with what redoubled ardour will ſhe return to ſilence and ſtudy! From the noiſe, buſtle, and barrenneſs of modern converſation, with what exalted pleaſure will ſhe betake herſelf to the ſociety of the celebrated dead, or of admired authors yet alive, where all is ſtill, ſerene, and delightful! After being diſguſted with the nauſeous or the meagre diet, ſerved up in moſt companies, where low ſcandal, or mere town-talk, ſupply the place of urbanity and ſenſe; how rich

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and regaling will ſhe find that repaſt which her library is always ready to furniſh.

There ſhe will not fail of meeting with food of every different flavour, whether of a lighter or more ſolid ſubſtance, agreeable to her preſent inclination; at the ſame time that nothing is forced upon her, and ſhe is left at liberty, not only to vary the entertainment as often and as much as ſhe pleaſes, but alſo to riſe from it whenever ſhe will. Hiſtorians, Philoſophers, Orators, and Poets, the beſt writers of every claſs, within her compaſs, are ever prepared to gratify without conſtraint or ceremony her intellectual taſte. Nor will they take offence at any preference, which at any time ſhe may be diſpoſed to make. She can never intrude upon them at an improper ſeaſon, nor appear to leave them with abruptneſs: And when ſhe does leave them, inſtead of room for uneaſy retroſpect, the manner

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in which ſhe has been employed will be productive of ſelf-approbation. She will feel her ſoul nouriſhed and ſtrengthened, her ſpirits cheared and elevated, or collected and compoſed. The duties of life ſhe will go about with freſh reſolution, and a quicker comprehenſion of what becomes her. To congenial minds her attachment will be increaſed. With them ſhe will enjoy, as often as ſhe has opportunity, ſentimental and friendly delight, the circulation of thought, the reciprocation of confidence,

"The feaſt of reaſon, and the flow of ſoul."

And theſe, my friends, are ſatisfactions which depend not on youth, nor on the advantages peculiar to it: ſatisfactions which, in ſome reſpects at leaſt, will grow with your growing years; and which, in every caſe, will ſurvive the tranſient flower of beauty. Let me again remind you of the period of its decay. Of that period you cannot be reminded too often.

When it arrives, thoſe hollow-hearted men,

men, that for their own ends now ſwarm around you with every ſemblance of love or admiration, will diſperſe like flies at the approach of winter. In a little they will forget you as if you had never been; or remember you only to ſay to every one they meet, how much you are altered. But what words can paint the deſolation of her, who finds herſelf thus forſaken and deſpiſed, without any reſource in her own breaſt?

I think I ſee her flying to her glaſs, day after day, to obſerve whether that flatterer will prove more conſtant. At firſt ſhe is aſtoniſhed, ſhe is ſhocked, at the ſtupidity of thoſe men, who can become inſenſible to a face or a form like her's! But in a little that once ſoothing glaſs, which was wont to tranſport her with the reflected image of herſelf, begins to withdraw its flatteries too. She is alarmed and depreſſed. She ſeeks conſolation from ſome low dependent, who, with a grave face and glozing accent, aſ-

ſures,

ſures her ſhe is handſomer than ever; while the mercenary wretch ſecretly laughs her to ſcorn. Every artifice of dreſs, all the ſeduction of ornament, is ſtudied and practiſed with more exquiſite ſolicitude. She views herſelf on every ſide; the waſte ſeems repaired. Her ſpirits riſe; ſhe is overjoyed. With renewed expectation ſhe ſallies forth: ſhe dances her uſual round: ſome one in pity tells her how well ſhe looks: the evening is paſt in triumph. She returns home exhauſted with the flutter. Next morning the mirror is conſulted again. She is pale, ſickly; her eyes are ſunk; the wrinkles appear —— more than ever. Again ſhe is ſtartled, terrified, falls into a rage. The ſtorm burſts on her domeſtics, ſpends itſelf, ſubſides. The uſual methods are tortured, to make her up, and if ſome new expedient is ſuggeſted, that can better diſguiſe nature, and deceive the beholder —— what a diſcovery! Thus between the viciſſitudes of hope and fear, of exultation and deſpondence,

on

on a ſubject to her weak unfurniſhed mind the moſt intereſting of all others, ſhe is miſerably toſſed; till by ſuch repeated and violent perturbation, conſpired with the addition of years, ſhe is conſigned over to deſpair, the heat-overwhelming deſpair, of being never praiſed more for thoſe unhappy charms, which ſhe at length perceives are beyond recovery loſt.——What young woman of reflection would not prevent ſuch ridiculous diſtreſs? But can you think of any way to prevent it, ſo efficacious, as the turning betimes your principal attention to your better part? That even in this way you ſhall become wholly indifferent, about the decline of an appearance which uſed to give your friends as well as yourſelves pleaſure, I will not affirm. But if ſo high a ſtrain of philoſophy be hardly practicable, ſtill however I think you muſt acknowledge, that the advances of age will be ſupported much the more eaſily for ſuch preparation. In the mean while, how many

many vexations, that harraſs and diſtract the greater part of your ſex, will be thus obviated by you!

In truth, moſt of the grievances complained of by mortals are ſelf-created. They proceed from that fondneſs of fancy, which gives conſequence to trifles, or from thoſe guſts of paſſion which produce agitation without cauſe. But next to the power of religion, can you imagine any means of avoiding both ſo probable, as the wiſe and calm purſuits to which I would now perſuade you? Permit me, my much loved hearers, to ſucceed. Defer not, by the cultivation of your minds, as well as hearts, to lay in a ſtore of enjoyment and comfort, ſuch as you can repair to in ſecret, when all abroad is unſolacing and inſipid.

Every thing external is haſtening to change and diſſolution. You yourſelves are gliding inſenſibly down the current of time. Can you bear the thought of reſigning

reſigning your paſſage to eternity, to the blind impulſe of chance, caprice, and ignorance? Or, can you, like illiterate and incurious mariners, ſailing by ſome beautiful coaſt, be ſatisfied to hurry along, without attending to the various proſpects and numerous objects, which Nature and Art have ſpread out before you; or without taking advantage of the beſt aſſiſtance you can find on your voyage, to improve in whatever is inſtructive, or ornamental, and praiſe worthy? Have you forgotton, that, when landed on the bliſsful ſhore, your felicity will bear no inconſiderable proportion to your preſent attainments in knowledge; that the moſt enlarged underſtandings, where the diſpoſitions have been of a piece, will be rewarded by the nobleſt diſcoveries; in ſhort, that they who ſhine now with the faireſt lights of wiſdom ſhall, like the more diſtinguiſhed ſtars of heaven, be crowned hereafter with ſuperior ſplendor!

SERMON IX.

On Female Piety.

1 Tim. ii. 10.

—Which becometh women profeſſing Godlineſs.

Prov. xxxi. 30.

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, She ſhall be praiſed.

THE frailty of a woman has been often a topic of triumphant declamation. On this ſubject much unkind wit has been diſplayed; and many a dull ſarcaſm is daily added, and widely circulated, with an air of conſcious ſatisfaction. Hardly can one go into a company of men, where licentiouſneſs of tongue paſſes for freedom of converſation, without hearing the poor women abuſed for their worthleſſneſs, or weakneſs, or both. But ſuppoſing them particularly frail, is it noble to exult over them

them on that account, and in their abſence too, when they have not an opportunity of defending themſelves? Should not the ſtrong rather pity and ſupport the weak? Yet after all, how does it appear that any ſingular ſtrength of reſolution belongs to our ſex, or that yours ſtand chargeable with peculiar infirmity?

The loſs of virtue is, no doubt, frequently followed with extreme depravity in women. But is not the ſame thing to be ſeen amongſt men; though it is not remarked with the ſame attention, or cenſured with equal rigour? If many unhappy females do indeed run into ſuch "exceſs of riot, and ſuperfluity of naughtineſs," as ſeem to juſtify the obſervation, that there is nothing ſo profligate as a vicious woman; may it not be imputed to their being driven almoſt to a ſtate of deſpair? Forſaken as they are by the wretches that ruined them, abandoned by their relations, if any they have, commonly

dreading the ſcorn of their own ſex, and frequently too little conſidered by the virtuous part of ours; what can be expected, in general, from creatures who have put off the modeſty of nature, and are propelled by evil habits, co-operating often with baſe aſſociates, and bitter poverty?—Do I then plead the cauſe of vice! God forbid. But I cannot abide that want of candour, which would aggravate the guilt and miſery of beings, who to us ſhould be objects of ſo much compaſſion; I ſay to Us, of whom many are the firſt authors of this very guilt and miſery, while the reſt are all likewiſe ſubject to go aſtray.

I ſhall probably be aſked here, Does not the apoſtle Peter expreſsly ſtile the woman the weaker veſſel? He does; but in the ſame ſenſe that thoſe veſſels are ſtyled, which being of finer materials, or more delicate conſtruction, and therefore eaſily broken or hurt, are for that reaſon, and for the regard alſo which people

people have for them, uſed with particular tenderneſs. That this is his meaning is manifeſt from the paſſage referred to, where he ſays, "Give honour unto "the wife as unto the weaker veſſel." Why honour on that ſcore, if either Weaker is not to be underſtood as I have now, according to the beſt interpreters, explained it.

But does not St. Paul, ſome verſes after the text from Timothy, obſerve, that "Adam was not deceived, but the Wo-"man being deceived was in the tranſ-"greſſion?" True: it does appear from the hiſtory, that "the ſerpent," as our Apoſtle ſays elſewhere, "beguiled Eve "through his ſubtility;" and that the man, though aware of the deceit, was, by his fondneſs for his deluded yet ſtill lovely partner, drawn into the ſame tranſgreſſion. But what was it that expoſed the woman to that ſnare by which ſhe was ſeduced? Paſſions, I will own, exceedingly culpable in their nature, and

fatal in their conſequences; but not the paſſion for which her daughters have been indiſcriminately blamed. In reality, the reſolute ſpirit and perſevering vigilance, with which a great number of women preſerve their honour, while ſo few men in compariſon are reſtrained by the laws of continence, ſeem to me no ſlight proof that the former poſſeſs a degree of fortitude well worthy of praiſe.

But what is all this to the purpoſe of our preſent meditation? Much every way. I meant it as my firſt argument in behalf of Female Piety; and on what footing it ſtands I will proceed to ſhow, after remarking that the perſons to whom our text from St Paul is addreſſed, are by him ſuppoſed to profeſs a reſpect for religion——"As becometh "women profeſſing Godlineſs;" a ſuppoſition we are willing to make in your favour, my beloved hearers; ſo far, I mean, as to render it neceſſary to inculcate that profeſſion from thoſe general notions

notions of truth and duty, which, with a few exceptions, I do hope you readily acknowledge. Inſtead of this, our reaſoning and exhortations will turn chiefly on ſuch principles and facts as relate more immediately to your ſex, ſituation, and time of life, conſidered in conjunction with the character and manners of the age.

And now for the argument already ſuggeſted, you will be more ſenſible of its force by attending to the following obſervations; That the firmneſs, with which ſo many of you guard your virtue, being transferred to the practice of Piety at large, will, by God's aſſiſtance, contribute to render it eaſy and delightful; that the conſiderations of Religion will, in their turn, ſupport and cheer you under the reſtraints of conſcience and decorum; that you will hence derive the mighty ſatisfaction of the Divine Approbation amidſt the cenſures of the uncharitable, and the Divine protection a-

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gainſt the machinations of the ungodly; and, in the laſt place, that the injuſtice, unkindneſs, and treachery of the world, ſhould engage you to greater Prudence, Piety, and Devotion.

As to the firſt, it is certain that the practice of real Piety requires no ſmall reſolution and perſeverance. Is it not likewiſe certain, that in what concerns their reputation, many young women poſſeſs a large ſhare of theſe? Let them but apply this to the diſcharge of their duty as Chriſtians; and the happieſt effects will enſue; uniformity, facility, and joy in religion. What cannot courage and conſtancy atchieve? In the point to which I allude, you indeed are often heroines. Your life is a ſeries of ſelf-denial. But ſelf-denial from right principles is the perfection of Chriſtianity. Do but act on thoſe principles throughout, and you ſhall one day walk in white with your Saviour: he will confeſs your names as worthy before his Father and

before

before his angels: you ſhall follow the Lamb whitherſoever he goeth, ſinging to your golden harps a new ſong, expreſſive of ſignal triumph and praiſe.

It has been ſaid of women, and I believe with truth, that they are remarkably ſteady to their purpoſe. Let it be ſeen that you are ſo in what is good. And, "let not your good be evil ſpoken of," on account of any thing upon your part that might give ground to ſuſpect you controul your paſſions in one way only, and that too from no higher principle than the fear of ſhame. By a noble command of yourſelves in other points, wherein this conſideration cannot be ſuppoſed to operate ſo ſtrongly, make it appear that you are governed by religious as well as by prudential motives.

We would not leſſen the influence of any one wiſe or uſeful conſideration, from the ſide of this world: but we wiſh your minds to lie more open to the efficacy

cacy of the next. So far indeed as mere reputation goes, it may be much the ſame to a woman, whether the regularity of her conduct is the reſult of pious or of political maxims. But in the ſight of God, and at the bar of conſcience, how vaſt the difference! In that day when the ſecrets of all hearts ſhall be laid open, what will it avail you, if the decency of your behaviour ſhould be found to have proceeded from no nobler ſpring than the deſire of ſaving appearances? Who can expreſs the horror of a female hypocrite at that all-revealing period, when ſtript of every diſguiſe, ſhe ſhall be pointed out to the congregated univerſe as an infamous creature, whoſe ſoul was inſlaved to ſenſuality, at the very time that ſhe affected the ſtricteſt virtue, treated indiſcretion in others with the ſeverity due to vice alone, had no allowances to make for human frailty, and with ſupercilious diſdain looked down on many of her ſex not half ſo wicked as herſelf?

Let

Let it be carefully remembered, that as, in what regards outward trials, the goſpel is literally the goſpel of the croſs; ſo, with reſpect to inward conflicts, it is properly the diſcipline of the paſſions. Here, in truth, the religion of a Chriſtian muſt begin and end. What pity, my honoured pupils, if you who have that amazing power over the exterior of your deportment, if you who offer to a ſpotleſs name thoſe continual ſacrifices which your greateſt enemies cannot deny, ſhould after all loſe the reward of undiſſembled ſanctity, by being excluded from that viſion of God, which Jeſus has promiſed to the pure in heart! What pity in the mean while, that ſuch power is not more generally allowed to exert itſelf on the ample theatre of a truly virtuous life; and that ſuch ſacrifices ſhould not, by the conſolations of devotion, be ſweetened, conſecrated, and turned into ſo many ſources of ſublime enjoyment!

But this reminds me of having likewiſe

wiſe ſaid, that the conſiderations of Religion will conduce mightily to ſupport and cheer you under the reſtraints of ſobriety and decorum. In proportion as theſe conſiderations are made more familiar, will theſe reſtraints become leſs painful, till at length they in a manner change their nature, and ſeem like ſilken bands, that even while they confine you, are no leſs eaſy than ornamental.

Between all other philoſophy and the philoſophy of Jeſus, one glorious diſtinction is this; that the latter not only diſplays a higher ſtandard of moral excellence, but alſo communicates ſuperior powers of virtuous action. To the fainter concluſions of Reaſon it ſuperadds the bright diſcoveries of Faith. The future world, with the great tranſactions of the ſupreme adminiſtration, which are introductory to it, are there unveiled. There the vanity, and withal the importance of the preſent ſtate, is unfolded. There divine pardon and eternal life,

life, as "the gift of God through Jeſus "Chriſt," are enſured and aſcertained to obedient believers. The hiſtory of the Redeemer is there exhibited with all beauty of ſimplicity, and energy of truth: a hiſtory, my dear hearers, equally important to all that read it, and to thoſe that read it with a ſerious unprejudiced diſpoſition, unſpeakably affecting; a hiſtory, which involves the moſt extenſive and laſting intereſts of human nature, and to ſuch as view it in that light carries with it, beyond all other writings, a vital, home-felt, and heart-awakening influence. The ingenious breaſt, inflamed by the friendſhip, and penetrated by the Spirit of Jeſus, burns with the love of virtue, and heaves with the hope of ſalvation. Jeſus is the patron of virtue: gratitude is one of its worthieſt incentives; and faith, which is the fundamental principle of the whole ſyſtem, faith in the mercy and acceptance of the Univerſal Father, through the mediation of his meritorious Son, by whom

he is carrying on a ſcheme of grace, that comprehends all ſincere penitents of whatever name or nation, throughout all ſucceſſive ages—this Faith, I ſay, imparts to feeble and deſponding creatures a ſtrength and encouragement that no other ſyſtem could ever inſpire.

Nor are theſe ideas beyond the ordinary reach of female underſtanding. They depend not on a nice chain of reaſoning, nor on the abſtruſe reſearches of ſcience. How much ſoever they may have been diſguiſed by the dreams of the ſchools, to conceive them as they are ſet forth in ſcripture, maſculine intellects are by no means neceſſary. Connected with facts the moſt aſtoniſhing to the imagination, and ſentiments the moſt touching to the heart, they ſeem to lie particularly level to the better characters of your ſex. In ſhort, to feel their tendency, and experience their operation, a modeſt, ſuſceptible, and affectionate mind is chiefly required.

Permit

Permit me to aſk you, as in the preſence of God, do you in good earneſt believe in the Holy Ghoſt, in the catholic church, in the communion of ſaints, in the forgivenneſs of ſins, in the reſurrection of the body, in the life everlaſting, in Him who is the reſurrection and the life, the all-ſufficient ſacrifice, the all-prevailing advocate, the meek, the lowly, and the loving maſter, as well as the awful and impartial judge? Do you often by devout contemplation realize theſe, and the other wonderful objects of Chriſtianity, together with the grand principles of Natural Religion? To both do you frequently join the heaven-moving force of fervent prayer, the powerfully combined influences of public worſhip, and the ſweetly ſupporting communications of holy friendſhip? Then ſay, whether you can ever be at a loſs for motives to animate, or for aids to ſecond your endeavours after wiſdom and virtue? Surely no.

Wiſdom and virtue are beautiful forms, and for their own intrinſic worth unqueſtionably entitled to all poſſible love and veneration. But little acquainted with the human heart are they, who would build the morals of mankind on this ſingle baſis. Decency of character, dignity of conduct, the honours due to temperance, integrity, benevolence, magnanimity, and the like, are ideas as ſolid as they are refined, and which ought certainly to be cheriſhed by all who are capable of comprehending their moment. To offer to depreciate them as vile, and not more repugnant to reaſon than to ſcripture, where the beauties of holineſs are expreſsly named, and "whatſoever things "are venerable, lovely, and of good "report," are, as mentioned in a former diſcourſe, recommended in ſo many words. But yet, on the other hand, conſidering the paſſions, diſorders, and debility of beings, ſituated as we are; to truſt the cauſe of righteouſneſs and truth

truth to the ſole ſtrength of ſuch arguments——what is it, but hazarding the moſt valuable intereſts in the world on a bottom utterly unequal to ſo precious a freight?

A few ſelect ſpirits, more liberal and elevated than uſual, may, in their progreſs towards perfection, derive ſome extraordinary aſſiſtance from thoſe ſublimer ſpeculations; at leaſt when not under very difficult or delicate circumſtances of temptation. But what, think ye, would become even of them; much more, what would become of the far greater part, when immediately under ſuch circumſtances, did not Religion ſtep into their aid with her more forcible and ſtriking ſanctions, founded on their hopes and fears for futurity, as theſe are connected with a ſenſe of the Almighty's inſpection, and a faith in the illuſtrious facts of revelation? How little in general were the philoſophers of antiquity themſelves influenced by

the ſyſtem in queſtion, with whatever pomp they profeſſed, or with whatever eloquence they diſplayed it! Some of them indeed were men of great virtues, as well as great conceptions, while the reſt were ſtriking examples, how much eaſier it is to talk than to act well, and that to reform the world there is wanted a diviner power than reaſon alone.

With regard to the caſe now before us, it may be obſerved, that thoſe young perſons, who have had the misfortune to be in a great meaſure left to the common notices of nature, go aſtray much more frequently than others, on whom the principles of Piety have been early and judiciouſly impreſſed.

When I ſay judiciouſly impreſſed, I mean to inſinuate, that many hopeful children have been loſt, through the imprudent efforts of their well meaning, but ill-informed parents, to make them good by ſevere cofinement and conſtant admonition,

admonition. Thoſe children alone will be truly good, and are likely to continue ſo, who are at once enamoured of their duty, awed by their Maker, and devoted to the ſecuring of that "life "and immorality which are brought to "light through the Goſpel."

Here I cannot help recollecting a moſt memorable inſtance, wherein a much-celebrated youth was guarded againſt the indulgence of appetite by the power of religion. I ſpeak of Joſeph, when tempted by the wife of Potiphar. Conſider the complicated ſnare that was laid for his innocence; probably the blandiſhments of beauty; certainly the repeated, preſſing, and paſſionate ſolicitations of an artful woman, of his miſtreſs, who if ſhe pleaſed could eaſily procure his farther advancement; the opportunities of privacy; the proſpect of cloſe concealment; his time of life; his plentiful condition: thoſe warm affections, that ſtrong ſenſibility, which the

ſequel

ſequel of his ſtory ſhows to have been natural to him; the extreme danger manifeſtly attending his refuſal, I mean, all the miſchiefs to be dreaded from the reſentment and violence of a proud but fond female, reſiſted, diſappointed, enraged, who would not fail, however falſely, to repreſent the unbounded confidence of a generous maſter abuſed; and, finally, thoſe miſchiefs falling at one blow upon a dependant and a ſtranger, whoſe proſperity in that family had no doubt rendered him the object of envy to ſome, and whoſe proteſtations in his own favour would never be believed by others to the diſadvantage of a woman of her rank and fortune.—Such was the ſnare. And what was it that enabled our amiable hero to conquer it? The hiſtory will inform you. "He "refuſed, and ſaid unto his maſter's "wife, Behold, my maſter wotteth not "what is with me in the houſe, and he "hath committed all that he hath to my "hand. There is no greater in this "houſe

" houſe than I; neither hath he kept
" back any thing from me but thee, be-
" cauſe thou art his wife: how can I do
" this great wickedneſs and ſin againſt
" God?"——Excellent young man! from a crime, to which ſo many allurements concurred to incite him, he ſtarts back with horror; ſo ſtrongly are his natural feelings of gratitude and probity, ſeconded by a reverence for the Omniſcient—" How then can I do this
" great evil, and ſin againſt God?"—No, my ſiſters, there is not in this world ſuch a preſervative from vice as the fear of God. Temptations, by which human reſolutions alone have been frequently foiled, are often overcome by the ſame reſolutions when enforced by religious faith.

From theſe remarks you will plainly perceive, that what we wiſh for you is not a victory over your paſſions, hardly gained, and at the expence of your tranquility; but a ſacred ſelf poſſeſſion,

a certain diviner controul of your own wills, that ſhall diſtinguiſh you in the ſight of him who "deſireth truth in the "inward parts." A ſentiment that ſeems conformable to the beſt conceptions of nature; ſince we find that the power, which according to the Pagan creed repreſented both Wiſdom and Fortitude, was ſuppoſed to be of your ſex. On the ſame principles does the wiſeſt of men ſpeak ſo often of the former in the feminine gender. Thus at leaſt did ancient genius treat the women with reſpect. It is indeed obſervable, that of republican ſtates, where that genius commonly appeared moſt eminent, the ſage legiſlators preſcribed to females a particular gravity and ſimplicity of manners; ſo different were their ideas of what was becoming, from thoſe of modern times!

But I added farther, that, from the ſtudy of inward purity as well as outward decorum, even that purity which the

goſpel ſo peculiarly enforces, you will reap the mighty ſatisfaction of the Divine Approbation amidſt the cenſures of the uncharitable, and the Divine Protection againſt the machinations of the ungodly. Hard enough, it muſt be owned, is the caſe of women as to the general reflexions made on their deportment. If they behave with reſerve, they are pronounced prudiſh; if with frankneſs, bold; if with that juſt temperance of both which is the proper medium, capricious and uncertain. What ſhall they do? What can they do, but hold the middle way, with that attention to the rules of caution on one ſide, and of affability on the other, which times, places, and perſons ſeem to reqire, "committing their cauſe to him "that judgeth righteouſly," and truſting for their ſafety to him that never forſakes the virtuous?

Such a reſpect for human judgment, as avoids giving occaſion of cenſure, is undoubtedly

undoubtedly right in every individual of ſociety, of your ſex eſpecially, whoſe reputation is of ſo nice a contexture. But while for this purpoſe a Chriſtian Woman purſues, as nearly as ſhe can, the path of prudence; what internal ſerenity does ſhe enjoy, by following at the ſame time the direction of principle, that higheſt and happieſt guide of life! To ſay the truth, there may be ſituations, wherein the latter appears to be left the ſole guide; ſo impoſſible is it for the former to find a way through the labyrinth. In this caſe, you can have but one reaſonable care; which is, to do what conſcience charges as your duty. In every caſe, that muſt be your principal care. In making it ſo, there will be this great advantage amongſt many others, that you will every day grow leſs anxious about any thing elſe. The eaſe of mind, the gaiety of heart reſulting from ſuch a conduct, are not to be expreſſed.

If

If the world approves, it is well. The approbation of the beſt people, at leaſt, will give you real pleaſure; and the beſt people are naturally candid. If the world ſhould condemn, and even the candid Few, which is by no means impoſſible, ſhould be led by miſrepreſentation, or by miſtake, to join in the ſentence; ſtill however you will have the comfort of not having deſerved it. And from this inferior tribunal you will have the felicity of appealing to that which is ſupreme and infallible, with the humble aſſurance of being juſtified there through the powerful interpoſition of an advocate, whom no paſſion or miſapprehenſion can ever bias. At the ſame time you will have the conſolation to hope, that ſooner or later he in whom you truſt "will bring forth your "righteouſneſs as the light, and your "judgment as the noon day." Seldom or never, I think does a preſerving virtue fail of breaking out with freſh beauty and augmented luſtre, from thoſe

clouds with which calumny may have obſcured it; even as the vernal ſun by purſuing his career, ſhines forth at laſt with a kind of victorious ſplendor, that diſpels the remaining damps of winter, delights the eye, and inſpires the heart of every beholder.

But ſuppoſe the worſt, that the erroneous multitude ſhould continue to load you with unmerited reproach; I am not afraid to ſay that you are happy ſtill, if you know how to avail yourſelves of the ſupports of religion, particularly a ſenſe of the Almighty's Approbation. What indeed ought to diſcourage her who can triumph in this, and in that which is immediately connected with it, an aſſurance of the Almighty's Protection?

Nothing can be more certain, than that your ſex is, on every account, entitled to the ſhelter of ours? Your ſoftneſs, weakneſs, timidity, and tender reliance on man; your helpleſs condition

on in yourſelves, and his ſuperior ſtrength for labour, ability for defence, and fortitude in trial; your tacit acknowledgement of theſe, and frequent application for his aid in ſo many winning ways concur to form a plea, which nothing can diſſallow or withſtand but brutality. Appetite indeed is naturally brutal. Untamed by religion, unchained by reaſon, what havock does it not commit? Nothing can be more wild or ferocious than lawleſs deſire. How often, alas, does it diſfigure and degrade minds otherwiſe adorned with very valuable qualities! Have we not ſeen men, who in a ſober mood were open to the tendereſt feelings of humanity, incapable of any thing unjuſt or diſhonourable, calm, and pliant to good advice; who yet, in the rebellion of their blood, were as ungovernable and fierce as any beaſt of the foreſt, broke through all reſtraint, and, to gratify the paſſion that impelled them, ruſhed on crimes utterly repugnant to the beſt ſentiments of

their own hearts!—— Need I tell you that from ſuch men your virtue is in danger, and by ſo much the more by how much the qualities juſt named are, when allowed to operate, particularly engaging? But the fact is, that, being inlaid in the conſtitution, they do operate frequently, and never perhaps more than immediately after thoſe unhappy deviations, for which ſomething within whiſpers the neceſſity of making every poſſible attonement. It is in this way that thoſe good-natured but unhappy men keep themſelves and one another in countenance, and often ſteal into your affection. Yet are theſe by no means the worſt enemies of womankind.

It is your ſmooth, cool, complimental libertines, who have ſteeled their breaſts by a ſyſtem, whom the boaſted principles, or rather no-principles of infidility, have raiſed to a glorious contempt of all laws human and divine, delivered from the vulgar conceit of immortality,

mortality, and enabled to conquer the little weakneſſes of nature, with the ignoble prejudices of education, which happened to be on the ſide of juſtice, honour, ſympathy;—it is ſuch men, my fair ones, ſuch flagitious and obdurate wretches, whoſe wiles, ſhould you chance to be thrown in their way, you muſt have reaſon to dread. And believe me, they abound every where. From you indeed they will carefully conceal the enormity of their characters and the blackneſs of their opinions; till by gaining your confidence they can inſinuate the laſt with advantage, ſo as to take off your apprehenſions of the firſt, and to blunt the edge of your reſolutions. A ſenſe of piety, the love of virtue, a regard to reputation, the fear of conſequences, every principle borrowed from this world and the next, they are well aware would be alarmed and excited, were they to diſcloſe their deſigns, or explain their ideas at once, without preparation or preface.—But

I will not attempt to unfold the miſtery of iniquity, in which they wrap themſelves, and work unſuſpected. Let it remain involved in its native darkneſs and horror; which cannot however hide it from the eye of heaven, whoſe hotteſt vengeance ſhall one day overtake and blaſt it.

Your ſafety, I ſaid before, lies in retreat and vigilance, in ſobriety and prudence, in virtuous friendſhip and rational converſation, in domeſtic, elegant, and intellectual accompliſhments; I add now, in the Guardianſhip of Omnipotence, as that which muſt give efficacy to all the reſt; but which can only be obtained by ſomething more and better than them all, I mean True Religion. What reaſon indeed have you to hope for a priviledge ſo great, if you do not aſk it? What cauſe could you have to complain, if your righteous Creator, on whom every conſideration ought to teach you dependance, were to leave

leave you to yourſelves, amidſt thoſe dangerous attacks, or artful ſnares, which you preſumptuouſly imagine you could reſiſt by your own ſtrength, or elude by your caution! That humility which does not depreſs, as Chriſtian humility never can, is the beſt means of ſecurity. She who is moſt ſenſible of her hazard, is moſt likely to be on her guard. She who perceives her own imbecillity, will be glad to invoke a higher power. Nor will the Parent of all be deaf to one of his reaſonable offspring, who apprehenſive of the difficulties to which her frame and ſituation expoſe her, heartily implores his help.

Vain very often is the help of man, even when afforded in its utmoſt extent. What ſhall we ſay then, when it is not only not afforded, but when he who ought to protect is bent to deſtroy? To whom ſhall young creatures of your ſex, little lambs, innocent, gentle, fearful, undefended, beſet by ravenous lions

or

or " by wolves in ſheeps cloathing;" ——to whom ſhall they fly but to the Shepherd of Iſrael? And will he, think ye, reject or abandon them; he who has promiſed to " gather the lambs with " his arm, and to carry them in his bo- " ſom;" he who has always ſhewn himſelf more eſpecially concerned for objects of diſtreſs and deſtitution, the poor, the priſoner, the ſtranger, the oppreſſed, the widow, and fatherleſs, and ſuch as have none to help them; in a word, he whoſe providence is then neareſt, and whoſe aſſiſtance is then readieſt, when his creatures are moſt forſaken by others?

To procure the divine interpoſition, it is urged by the Pſalmiſt as a prevailing argument, that he was unprotected and deſolate: " O be not far from me: " for trouble is nigh at hand, and there " is none to help me. I looked on my " right hand, and beheld, but there was " no man that would know me; refuge " failed

" failed me; no man cared for my ſoul. " I cried unto thee, O Lord: I ſaid " thou art my refuge." The common Father " hears the young ravens when " they cry unto him," and are early left by their hard hearted dams. Are not ye better than many ravens?" Can a woman forget her " ſucking child, that " ſhe ſhould not have compaſſion on the " ſon of her womb?" ſays God by the prophet. He ſpeaks of it as a monſtrous thing, and ſcarce credible in any. Can ſhe forget ——She, in the ſingular number. The anſwer is remarkable; " Yea, they may forget"—— They, in the plural; confeſſing it impoſſible, that more than one ſuch wretch, may be found amongſt the dregs of nature. " Can a woman forget her " ſucking child? Yea they may forget, " yet I will not forget thee." Can you figure any thing more tender and ſoothing? Can you heſitate a moment to throw yourſelves on " the everlaſt- " ing arms, on his right hand, who

" rides

"rides on the heavens for your help, "on his excellency in the ſky?" Or having ſo done, can you harbour a doubt of your ſafety, while "your place "of defence is the munition of rocks?"

But to proceed to our laſt argument at this time; Let the injuſtice, unkindneſs, and treachery of the world, engage you to greater Prudence, Purity, and Devotion. Any natural or any amiable tye, by which you are or may be bound. God forbid that I ſhould ſeek to ſlacken. Moderate affections for proper objects you are allowed, you are called to indulge. By this means you will fill your places in ſociety, or be in the way to fill them; at the ſame that you will enjoy the beſt thing in human life, the friendly feelings of the heart. But ſhall I repeat once more, what in one ſhape or another has been ſaid ſo often, that whenever theſe are ill directed, or carried too far, they are ſure to entangle in

in guilt and diſquietude? Now to prevent, as much as poſſible, the wandering of your paſſions, the Almighty makes uſe of the paſſions of others. To bring good out of evil is the glory of his government. The worthleſſneſs of thoſe who have abuſed their freedom, he permits as a warning to you, no leſs than a puniſhment to them.

If men will endeavour to deſpoil that virtue which they ſhould cheriſh, to corrupt thoſe minds which they ſhould improve; in a word, to ruin that ſex whoſe honour and welfare are in a great meaſure entruſted with them; ſhould not ſuch baſeneſs fill you with diſdain and abhorrence? Can any of you be ſo mean, ſo ſurpaſſing mean, as to doat on the traitors? Even where their aim is not deſtruction, where merely for amuſement they flatter or ſoothe, ſhould you ſuffer yourſelves to be ſeduced into fondneſs? How fooliſh to be taken with thoſe little ſuperficial attentions,

that are ſo eaſily learnt in the ſchool of faſhion, and ſo frequently practiſed to hide a hollow, or diſguiſe an unfeeling ſoul.

Are you ignorant of its being an eſtabliſhed ſyſtem amongſt men of gaiety and pleaſure, that your ſex have no principles; that you are deſigned only to ſerve their purpoſes; and that, when you refuſe to do ſo, it is mere pride or groſs diſſimulation? Can you think of this and not be offended? Will you continue to prefer ſuch characters to the ſober, ſedate and ſentimental

You often behold the wrecks of beauty that has been blaſted, and of innocence that has been betrayed. Providence allows thoſe miſerable beings to carry their effrontery ſo far as to appear without ſhame in every public place, the monuments of male falſhood as well as female infatuation; and can you

you fail of being impreſſed with ſalutary terror?

Can you reſtrain the lightning of indignant virtue from darting out on thoſe men that, in your company, dare to ſpeak a language unfit for you to hear! Should not your eyes at leaſt make them ſenſible of the affront offered to your ears! And if they are hardened enough not to be aſhamed, does it not become you ever after to ſhun their ſight, as you would ſhun a Bear or a Satyr? I am ſure you will think ſo, if you conſult either the dignity of your ſex, or the purity of your minds.

Love grafted on eſteem, or fed by it, is a juſt and noble principle. But how has it been diſgraced by worthleſs pretenders! Join, my ſiſters, with all your power to vindicate its honours. Let the ſanctity of your conduct ſerve, as much as poſſible, to recall the paſſion from empty form and criminal indul-

gence, from the blind admiration of an outſide, and the ſhort-lived gratification of youthful deſire, to a genuine, holy, and enlightened affection; ſuch as ſpringing chiefly from a ſympathy of honeſt and generous hearts, ſhall flouriſh, when fancy, youth, and beauty, are no more.

If women will marry men of bad morals, if from whatever motive they will manifeſtly endanger their own ſalvation, by forming ſo intimate a connection with thoſe who betray a total neglect of theirs; what can we ſay either for religion or the ſex, that will make any impreſſion on thoſe who are prejudiced againſt both? What can ſhe plead that accepts without ſcruple the hand of a man, who is ſeldom or never ſeen in a place of worſhip, and whoſe companions are known to be profane or licentious? Is this to act, in the greateſt concern of life, like a perſon of principle?

It

It is a common complaint, nor can the fact be denied, that moſt of our young gentleman now-a-days entirely diſregard religious inſtitutions. But how can it be expected they ſhould do otherwiſe, ſo long as they find themſelves, in general, no way the leſs acceptable to the ladies, for ſuch faſhionable impiety?—What a ſcandal in "women "profeſſing Godlineſs!"

Amidſt ſo much diſorder, and ſo many ſnares on all hands, what can be ſo wiſe for you, my Chriſtian friends, as to take refuge more and more in the ſanctuary of Devotion?——Let us not diſſemble the truth. The greater part of either ſex ſtudy to prey on one anothet. The world, in too many inſtances, is a theatre of war between men and women. Every ſtratagem is tried, and every advantage taken, on the ſide of both. On the ſide of the former, ſtrength and daring are joined to art and ambition, in which the latter abound. To make a truce they

often meet. Even preliminiaries towards a peace are often propoſed. Individuals paſs over to the camp of the enemy, and are reconciled. But what ſhall we ſay of the contending powers at large? Methinks they reſemble this and a neighbouring kingdom, between which a general truce is always ſhort, and a national peace never ſecure.

To many young women the preacher will ſeem as one that mocks. The men they conſider as their beſt friends; and a laſting union is what they long for as the height of happineſs. An union, by one means or another, will probably take place. And if it ſhall, to know that it proved laſting, entire, and happy, as happy as the preſent ſtate permits, would, you may be well aſſured, give the preacher pleaſure. But if from this, or any imaginable connection upon earth, you hope for compleat felicity; your hopes will be vain. Imperfect yourſelves, you have no right to expect perfection

tion from men. In the moſt agreeable attachments, you will ſtill find a mixture. The beſt characters will ſometimes ſay, or do that, which ſhall occaſion pain; daily intercourſe will dull the reliſh of delight; and diſagreeable accidents, but eſpecially ſevere diſtreſs, will not improve the taſte for it. Devotion, dearly beloved, Devotion will be your ſureſt and ſweeteſt reſource. "Acquaint "yourſelves therefore now with God, "and be at peace."

Even now, I doubt not, ſome of you perceive that all beſides is uncertain and unſatisfactory. Your father and mother have forſaken you by death; or, which is worſe a great deal, by unnatural cruelty, or horrible ſelfiſhneſs. You have not perhaps, in this world a friend to ſupply their place: Or if you have, you cannot but know that human friendſhips are often fallacious, and like other human comforts always precarious. E-

very thing in nature is ſubject to viciſſitude; and nothing more uſual than for men to adopt a different deportment as their circumſtances or intereſts, their opinions or humours, vary. There is but one immutable friend, "a friend that "ſticks cloſer than a brother," a lover, or a parent. "He is the ſame yeſter-"day, and to day, and for ever. He "will never leave you: he will never "forſake you." He has engaged himſelf by his promiſe; and "he is not "man that he ſhould lie, neither the "ſon of a man that he ſhould repent."

I have often thought, that, in ſome reſpects, there is not any creature ſo forlorn or expoſed, as a young woman, beautiful, unexperienced, ſingle, almoſt wholly friendleſs, bred to affluence, left in dependance, perhaps in indigence, of which ſome wretch curſt with wealth is willing to avail himſelf for the vileſt ends. While I paint ſuch a ſituation, who does not

not ſee the need of Piety? What remains for this pretty ſufferer, but to hold faſt her innocence at all adventures, and look up to him "with whom "the fatherleſs find mercy."—"Protect me, O my heavenly Father, my "only ſure and never failing friend; "protect thy poor, dependant, helpleſs "creature. From this wilderneſs of "life I lift up my eyes to Thee; to thy "throne of pity I ſtretch out my arms "for ſuccour. Behold, I am needy, "and feeble, and full of affliction. I "trade among ſnares; I tremble for "fear.—But Thou art merciful. Save "me, O Lord, moſt mighty; ſave me "from evil men, from vain companions, "from folly, from myſelf. My wants "ſupply, moſt gracious: my weakneſs "ſtrengthen: for ever guard the virtue "by thee implanted. Thou art the "guide of my youth; lead me in a plain "path, becauſe of my enemies. Let "none have power to hurt me; may

"ſome

" ſome have the goodneſs to ſupport my
" ſteps. Send down Wiſdom from thy
" holy heavens, that ſhe may labour
" with me continually, and ſweetly coun-
" ſel me in all my doings. In Thee, O
" God, in Thee alone have I put my
" truſt: let me never be confounded.
" Be my God for ever and ever, and
" my guide even unto death. I aſk it
" for the ſake of my Divine Redeemer.
" Amen."

SERMON

SERMON X.

On Female Piety.

1 Tim. ii. 10.

—Which becometh women profeſſing Godlineſs.

Prov. xxxi. 30.

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, She ſhall be praiſed.

DEVOTION, my beloved hearers, is a buſineſs of too much importance and dignity to be yet diſmiſſed from our meditation. What has been already ſaid on this head, is but a ſmall part of that which I would recommend to your attention. From a former hint you will readily conceive, that to preſent you here with a regular ſyſtem of piety is not my deſign. Such an attempt were ſuperfluous. Of the ſpiritual kind there are books innumerable, in which you will meet with all that can be ſaid on the ſubject in general. The In-

ducements

ducements to Religion, which are more immediately derived from your ſex and ſituation, together with thoſe effects, and thoſe exerciſes of it, that concern you more particularly, are the points to which my plan properly confines me.

I will begin this diſcourſe, by removing a bar, which has been thrown in our way by thoſe who have appeared fond of every occaſion to depreciate the better half of the human ſpecies. The devotion of women has been conſidered as nothing more than the paſſion of love directed to a divine object, when in reality they longed for an inferior one, or happened to be diſappointed in their wiſhes: an opinion which has given occaſion to ſome wit and more ridicule.

It ſeems to have proceeded chiefly from two cauſes; the amorous ſtyle which has by too many female pens been adopted into devotional writings; and the multitudes of young women, who denied originally the opportunity of indulging their natural inclinations, or afterwards croſſed in the purſuit

purſuit of them, have flung themſelves headlong into the gloomy retreats of a miſtaken piety, where they have been taught to offer at a heavenly ſhrine thoſe fires which were not ſuffered to burn freely elſewhere.

But now on the former circumſtance I would obſerve, that the language of love has not, ſo far as I know, been admitted into books of devotion more frequently by female than by male authors; and that in this practice both have probably thought themſelves warranted by the example of Solomon in his well known Song! a compoſition, of which I muſt needs ſay, that how naturally ſoever it came from a monarch of his character, in thoſe earlier days of eaſtern imagination and eaſtern ardour, it ſhould by no means be made a model for Chriſtian writers. In the New Teſtament, although produced from the ſame region, we find very little of this ſort, and that little in the chaſteſt and pureſt ſtrain; at the ſame time that there we are expreſsly required and taught, "to worſhip God who "is a Spirit in Spirit and in truth." But when

when we diſapprove of the practice as indiſcreet, muſt we condemn it too as ſenſual; or becauſe in ſome it may have been the ebullition of a laſcivious fancy, ſhall we pronounce it to be ſo in all? Certain it is, that among ſuch as have uſed it, there have been not a few eminently diſtinguiſhed by the purity of their manners.

In the caſe of thoſe numerous votaries to the Church of Rome, who, by violence or craft, deſpondence or ſuperſtition, are immured in convents; what can be more natural, more reaſonable, or in truth more neceſſary, than that, being deprived of the pleaſures of this world, they ſhould aſk conſolation from the next? Or if finding it impoſſible to cultivate one of the ſtrongeſt propenſities of the human heart, by that kind of commerce which Nature intended, can they be juſtly blamed for turning to an object, whoſe infinite excellence ſhall furniſh endleſs ſcope for the beſt ſentiments and nobleſt affections of the ſoul, thoſe that are immediately connected with piety? Will not the ſame way of reaſoning be applicable

to

to women living in the world? I apprehend it will.

But the opinion we now examine would, at bottom, reflect no diſhonour on feminine devotion, did not thoſe who entertain it proceed upon a low idea of the paſſion referred to. Whatever hold that paſſion, for purpoſes apparently wiſe, may take at firſt of the animal part of our frame, they are utter ſtrangers to its genuine character, who do not know that it is capable of riſing to the utmoſt refinement. By pleading the cauſe of Virtuous Love, I ſhall be able to prove its connection with that which is Divine to be founded in nature, I mean in cultivated nature, where a ſenſe of the Divinity obtains. As virtuous love operates on both the ſexes pretty nearly alike, what I am going to obſerve of its effects on the men may, I believe, be juſtly applied to the impreſſions produced by it on the women.

A man ſees in ſome public place a great number of young ladies whom he never

ſpoke to. He ſurveys them all. He is ſtruck with one, who is really leſs beautiful than ſeveral others preſent, and who is ſo even in his eyes: in her favour he decides at once. It is a common caſe: how ſhall we account for it? I conceive, thus: Every countenance expreſſes, or is thought to expreſs, a character peculiar to itſelf; and that which correſponds moſt with our particular taſte in the way of temper, behaviour, underſtanding, we neceſſarily and ſpontaneouſly prefer. By this character, therefore, whether real or imaginary, we are determined. As was hinted in a former diſcourſe, it is the ſoul we ſeek. With mind only can mind unite. That which is preſent to our eyes, attracts us merely as an image of that which they cannot perceive. Our ſenſes may be ſaid to tie the knot; but, ſtrictly ſpeaking, the knot is formed in the ſoul. Our ſenſes are properly the vehicles of our affection; but to that affection they ſtill act in ſubordination. It is ſupreme. Its power indeed is ſo great, that were the gratification of the ſenſes, in the paſſion we are now conſidering, to interfere

terfere with the intereſt of our nobler part, or with this exalted ſentiment which conſtitutes its joy, they would be ſacrificed without heſitation. To virtuous love the ſpirit of ſacrifice is eſſential. What hazards, hardſhips, loſſes and pains, have not this generous attachment encountered with pleaſure, and even with ecſtaſy; happy in manifeſting its zeal by the moſt arduous proofs! To mention but one inſtance among ten thouſand, and that recorded in Holy Writ; we are told, that "Jacob "ſerved ſeven years for Rachel, and that "they ſeemed to him but a few days"—— Why? "For the love he had to her."

But now ſuppoſe the man we have juſt imagined, to cheriſh with fondneſs the ſudden impreſſion made upon him by a certain appearance; to be introduced to the lady, and to admire her more and more for thoſe internal qualities, which, from that appearance, he preſumes her to poſſeſs. With her looks too he is every day more deeply ſmitten, but ſtill as they are the fancied picture of her mind. This ideal form fol-

lows him every where. Buſineſs, company, amuſement, he could not endure but for the thoughts of her, which are for ever intermingling. Her converſation, her ſmiles, her approbation, even the ſlighteſt marks of her regard, are to him happineſs unequalled, and ſuch as can only be excelled by the entire poſſeſſion of the endearing object. He purſues, he obtains it. And now ſuppoſe him to diſcover, that the character he uſed to contemplate with tranſport was merely imaginary; that ſhe is abſolutely deſtitute of the diſpoſitions, the ſentiments, in one word, the ſoul which he had fondly figured——Need I ſpeak the reſt? Ah, what diſappointment and miſery! Where now is his love? Where the ſacred, fervent, elevated paſſion, he ſo lately foſtered as the felicity of his life? Intellectual and moral beauty he chiefly ſought. He finds it not: and becauſe he does not find it, what happens? His very ſenſes, though remaining conſtitutionally the ſame, revolt, are diſguſted and chilled. The enchanting face enchants no more: and why? Becauſe it no longer reflects the image

image that inflamed his breaſt. A fool or a tyrant ſtarts up there, where ſenſe and ſoftneſs ſeemed to reſide.

But, now let us reverſe this unhappy part of the ſcene, and ſuppoſe that the lady's real character anſwers to her appearance; that, inſtead of loſing, ſhe gains by a more intimate acquaintance; in ſhort, that certain hidden graces, which no feature, form or air could fully expreſs, diſplay themſelves as circumſtances riſe to call them forth: what will be the conſequence? That the youthful ardour of our lover will increaſe! No, but a better ardour will; that of rational eſteem, ſentimental complacence, and ſelf-congratulation. The other, as he advances in life, will gradually abate, and at length vaniſh. What then? Will his tenderneſs vaniſh, or his affection abate? By no means. We have ſeen that from the beginning it was the love of her mind principally. It is ſo now more than ever. It has leſs emotion; it has more ſolidity: it is leſs earthly; it is more divine. It is love mellowed into friendſhip.——

What ſhall I ſay? It is the fineſt feeling of the human heart: and the attraction grows, partly by habit, partly by the increaſe of thoſe qualities that cauſed it on her ſide, and partly by the improvement of good diſpoſitions on his. Thoſe tumultuous and irregular pleaſures to which, perhaps, before he knew her, he was addicted, have now loſt their reliſh. The calm, yet intereſting joys, he taſtes in her ſociety, occupy all his leiſure. From every engagement, whether of the buſy or idle kind, he returns to her with new delight, glad to ſhake off the interrupting world, and impatient when it compels him to any long abſence. By the lovely ſympathies of her gentle boſom, his cares are ſoothed, his labours ſoftened, and his loſſes rendered eaſy. Is he ſucceſsful? His ſucceſs is triumph, from this thought, "I ſhall be able to make her "more happy whom my ſoul loveth." Is ſhe in pain or ſickneſs? Does her health decline? Will this man look on unconcerned? Ah! no: he will hang over her bed of diſtreſs with augmented fondneſs, with an anguiſh more charming than all the luxury of ſenſual

ſenſual indulgence. Is her bloom withered? Are the allurements of youth at laſt gone? Will he grow indifferent? No, no! in his eye ſhe is handſome ſtill. In all ſhe ſays, and does, and looks, he ſtill beholds, and ſtill admires, the unfaded and unfading beauties of her ſoul.

If any profane or inſenſible wretch, prone "to ſpeak evil of the things which he "knows not," and which he cannot know, ſhould affect to treat this repreſentation with ridicule, as viſionary and unnatural, I can only pity him. You who are diſpoſed to be ingenious and candid, may reſt aſſured, that it is taken from life. Thoſe whom it reſembles will own it is true, while they find it imperfect. But, imperfect as it is, it will, if I miſtake not, be ſufficient to prove the point for which I have produced it.

Abſtract, my ſiſters, from that regard to perſon, which in the pureſt paſſion between the ſexes we have acknowledged to be an original ingredient, but which we have found

found to be only an inferior ingredient, and one whoſe operation is ſoon diminiſhed; abſtract from this, and what is there in all the reſt, that may not be traced to the love of excellence? But what elſe, I would gladly know, is the leading idea in the love of God? Between that Firſt of Beings, and the moſt accompliſhed of his creatures, the diſtance, indeed, is infinite. The faireſt virtues we ſee around us are, at beſt, but faint emanations from Him, who is "the perfec-"tion of beauty." But from theſe, and from the admiration they inſpire, it is, that we are led up to Him, as by ſo many pleaſing though ſcattered ſtreams to their fountain.

And now ſuppoſe that a young woman, poſſeſſed with the belief of this higheſt excellence, is diſappointed in her proſpect of an agreeable union with one of our ſex: ſhe turns her thoughts to heaven. She contemplates truth and rectitude, wiſdom and goodneſs, power, mercy and faithfulneſs, in their ſource. She conſiders them as all working together for her good; ſhe ſees them

them ſhining through the cloud of diſappointment; from this cloud ſhe hears, as it were, her Maker thus addreſſing her: "My "daughter, give me thy heart. Thy ſu"preme affection none upon earth can de"ſerve. Human attainments are all de"fective; human regards are often inſin"cere. Put not your truſt in the ſon of "man: he may deceive, or he may change, "or he may not be able to protect you. "But of this kind you have nothing to fear "from your Creator. Throw thyſelf, my "child, on my friendſhip."——She is not diſobedient to the heavenly call. She proſtrates herſelf in the preſence of the Moſt High. To Him ſhe devotes that heart which he formed; to Him ſhe pours it out with freedom. She adores the perfections of His nature; the frailties of her own, with all the failings of her life paſt, ſhe penitently confeſſes; her tears flow. Her mind is relieved; conſolation pervades her ſoul; out of weakneſs ſhe waxes ſtrong. Virtue never appeared to her half ſo fair; Religion riſes before her in full majeſty; everlaſting objects open to her view; ſolitude and ſilence

lence begin to charm. Converſe with her God, with her Saviour, with her Bible, with Herſelf, yields a pleaſure hitherto unknown. In the midſt of ſociety ſhe longs for its return; from the diſſipation of amuſement ſhe retreats with joy; ſelf-denial for the ſake of God, and goodneſs, loſes its name; her duty is her delight; the ſpirit of ſacrifice is felt in all its nobleneſs. She is great, and ſhe is happy.——Say, ye ſons of raillery, ye ſcoffers at female devotion, declare what is there in all this, unnatural, irrational, or in any reſpect unſuitable to the beſt conceptions of the human mind?

From what I have ſaid, let none imagine, that I mean to inſinuate female devotion may not be found in married as well as ſingle life; or that a woman will not have recourſe to piety, unleſs ſhe is driven to it by diſappointed love. This, like every other diſtreſs, and more perhaps than any other, will prompt a young perſon of reflexion to turn to the Almighty. But of worth or ingenuity, thoſe ſurely have no true feeling

ing, who think that the character of the Supreme cannot, from a heart well-diſpoſed, command an affectionate veneration in any condition, or under any circumſtance whatſoever.

That in Female nature there are certain Qualities, which ſeem peculiarly calculated, by the grace of God, to diſpoſe it for the reception and culture of this divine principle, I will proceed, in the next place, to demonſtrate.

That your ſex are in a particular degree, ſuſceptible of all the tender affections, will, I preſume, be allowed by moſt. Their propenſity to thoſe, with which the paſſion of love is more immediately complicated, has been charged upon them by many as matter of reproach. What to me appears in general to do them honour, is the warmth of their attachments, and their aptitude to be affected with whatever has a tendency to touch the heart. But, I have always thought, that the ſpirit of devotion depends on ſentiment, rather than ratiocination;

nation; on the feelings of gratitude and wonder, joy and ſorrow, triumph and contrition, hope and fear, rather than on theological diſquiſition however profound, or pious ſpeculation however exalted. Religion, it is certain, has been often amazed and loſt in the labyrinth of ſchool-divinity. Although, in "contending for the faith once "delivered to the ſaints," againſt the attacks of unbelievers, ſound criticiſm and diſpaſſionate argument be undoubtedly the proper weapons, and although to thinking minds they be alſo the natural inſtruments of information and conviction; yet is it not by them that the devotional principle is awakened and kept alive.

For unintelligible impreſſions, or wild enthuſiaſm. I am not an advocate. He that is, expoſes religion to diſgrace. Common ſenſe, calm reflexion, univerſal righteouſneſs, a humanity unlimited by party, a moderation that can applaud virtue in an enemy; theſe, my dear charge, muſt never be given up on any pretence, or for any perſuaſion. A faith without morality, a devotion

devotion repugnant to reaſon, are not Chriſtianity, but hypocriſy, or ſuperſtition. Beware of thoſe that, under the maſk of zeal, would ſeek to remove you from the only ground which, by God's bleſſing, can ſecure your ſtedfaſtneſs, improvement and comfort; I mean a ſober evangelical piety.

In the days of the Apoſtles, there were thoſe that "lay in wait to deceive, that "crept into widows houſes, and led cap-"tive ſilly women." In our days their ſucceſſors are numerous. I ſay again, Of ſuch beware; "leſt, by any means, as the "ſerpent beguiled Eve through his ſubtile-"ty, ſo your minds ſhould be corrupted "from the ſimplicity that is in Chriſt." Remember always, that whatever teacher or teachers would avail themſelves of the warmth of your paſſions, or the vivacity of your imaginations, to ſeduce you into any ſyſtem unfriendly to a good temper and a good life, do either miſtake the true deſign of the Goſpel, or have an ill deſign on you. But then, on the other hand,

you may be equally aſſured, that whatever teacher or teachers would attempt by dry diſputation, or cold inquiry, to convert or edify ſouls, are ſtrangers alike to nature and to Chriſtianity. What, in truth, is the latter, but an affectionate and powerful addreſs to the former, divinely adapted to take hold not of the underſtanding only, but of the conſcience, the will, and the paſſions; that is, of the moſt vital and operative principles of the heart?

Among the reſt, I mentioned the paſſion of Fear. We are told by an Apoſtle, that "perfect love caſteth out fear." But perfect love, in matters of religion, cannot, ſtrictly underſtood, be ſuppoſed compatible with human frailty. To that is the ſyſtem of Jeſus graciouſly proportioned. There the paſſion I ſpeak of is applied to, in a manner the moſt ſtriking that can be conceived. But for what purpoſe? To damp reſolution, or diſhearten hope? No; but to reſtrain the impetuoſity of deſire, and to prevent the miſery of diſorder; not to frighten you from the mercy-ſeat, but to

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ſhow you the neceſſity of taking ſhelter there. You, my female freinds, are naturally fearful. A conſcious weakneſs prompts you continually to ſeek protection. Feeling yourſelves, and knowing your ſex to be helpleſs, you fly to men for ſafety. But do you always find it in them?—— Need I point to you a ſure refuge? I have done it already. Are you mortified at the timidity of your nature? are you depreſſed by the feebleneſs of your frame? I know not that you have cauſe. I am certain you have not; if a ſenſe of your condition has induced you to put yourſelves under the guardianſhip of Omnipotence. Many of you, it is evident, have the art of turning your infirmites to your own advantage, ſo far as concerns your influence with our ſex. But that power, which you thus extract from imbecility, is often, alas! by the unhappineſs of your paſſions, only rendered productive of new and greater weakneſſes; whereas, if you were wiſe, you might, on your natural frailty, build an invincible ſtrength, by ſecuring the protection of the Almighty.

Your encouragements to do this, by the practice of ſuch a piety as I am now recommending, I will conſider, in the next place; thoſe encouragements, I mean, which both Providence and Scripture preſent to your ſex, with an appropriation as obſervable in itſelf, as it is merciful to you.

Nothing can be more plain, than that Providence has placed you moſt commonly in circumſtances peculiarly advantageous for the exerciſes of devotion, and for the preſervation of that virtue, without which every profeſſion of godlineſs muſt be regarded as an impudent pretence. The ſituation of men lays them open to a variety of temptations that lie out of your road. The buſtle of life, in which they are generally engaged, leaves them often but little leiſure for holy offices. Their paſſions are daily ſubject to be heated by the ferment of buſineſs; and how hard is it for them to avoid being importuned to exceſs, while ſometimes a preſent intereſt, frequently a preſſing appetite, and yet, more frequently

ſerquently, the fear of ridicule ſtimulates them to comply! How very hard for a young man to withſtand

"The world's dread laugh,
"Which ſcarce the firm philoſopher can
"ſcorn!"

In the caſe of our ſex, do we not often ſee, ranked on the ſide of licentiouſneſs, that reputation which ought to attend on ſobriety alone? Is not the laſt openly laughed at by thoſe, to whoſe opinion giddy young men will pay moſt reſpect, their own companions? Is not its contrary cried up as a mark of ſpirit? And if, in their unreſtrained converſation amongſt a diverſity of humours, they meet with affronts, are they not conſtantly told, that the maxims of honour requires them to take revenge? Is not all this extremely unfavourable to the religious life, of which ſo great a part conſiſts in purity and prayer, in regularity and coolneſs, in ſelf-command and mild affections? but from ſuch ſnares your ſex are happily exempted.

In many inſtances men are attacted by folly, before they ſurrender; whereas, women muſt generally invite it by art, or rather, indeed, take it by violence, e'er they can poſſeſs themſelves of its guilty pleaſures. So far the Almighty, in conſideration of their debility, and from a regard of their innocence, has raiſed a kind of ſenſe about them, to prevent thoſe wilder excurſions into which the other ſex are frequently carried, with a freedom unchecked by fear, and favoured by cuſtom.

Corrupt as the world is, it certainly does expect from young women a ſtrict decorum; nor, as we have ſeen before, does it eaſily forgive them the leaſt deviation. And then, while you remain without families of your own, few of you are neceſſarily ſo engaged, as not to have a large portion of time with daily opportunities for recollection, if you are inclined to improve them. I go farther, and ſay, that your improving them by a piety, the moſt regular and avowed, if withal unaffected

and

and amiable, will be no ſort of objection to the men, but much the reverſe.

A bigotted woman, every man of ſenſe will carefully ſhun, as a moſt diſagreeable, and even dangerous companion. But the ſecret reverence, which that majeſtic form, Religion, imprints on the hearts of all, is ſuch, that even they who will not ſubmit to its dictates themſelves, do yet wiſh it to be regarded by thoſe with whom they are connected in the neareſt relations. The verieſt Infidel of them all, I am apt to believe, would be ſorry to find his ſiſter, daughter, or wife, under no reſtraint from religious principle. Thus it is, that even the greateſt libertines are forced to pay, at the ſame inſtant, a kind of implicit reſpect to the two main objects of their profligate ſatire, Piety and Women; while they conſider theſe as formed for each other, and tacitly acknowledge that the firſt is the only effectual means of enſuring the good behaviour of the laſt. Let them talk as long, and as contemptuouſly as they will, about that eaſy credulity, and thoſe ſuper-

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ſtitious terrors, which they pretend to be the foundation of your religion; ſomething within will always give them the lie, ſo long as they perceive that your religion renders you more ſteadily virtuous and more truly lovely.

But let us turn to Scripture, and ſee what peculiar incitement you have from thence to the profeſſion and practice of godlineſs. How encouraging to reflect, that the very firſt promiſe made to the human race, diſtinguiſhed your ſex with a mark of honour, as ſignal as it was unexampled! Need I explain myſelf by ſaying, that the greateſt perſonage who ever viſited our world, he who came on the moſt important deſign, and who executed it in the moſt wonderful manner, none other, in ſhort, than "the Son of God, who was "manifeſted to deſtroy the works of the "devil," and on their ruins to raiſe an empire of righteouſneſs and happineſs, elevated as heaven, and laſting as eternity—— that He, I ſay, was from the beginning predicted under the ſingular and intereſting character,

charactar, "of the ſeed of the woman?" How exalting a circumſtance for your whole ſex, that the Saviour of men, the admiration of angels, and the prince of heaven, was accordingly, "in the fulneſs of time "made of a woman?" And Oh, my young friends, what dignity will it for even reflect on maiden virtue, that "a vir-"gin conceived and bore a ſon, the only "begotten of the Father, full of grace "and truth?" Where is the religion, or the philoſophy, that has liſted your nature ſo high, or placed the beauty of female purity and excellence in a light ſo conſpicuous and noble?

Nor muſt we forget to take notice of the particular honours, with which individuals of your ſex have had their memories tranſmitted to proſperity by the ſacred records. Not to inſiſt on the females of the Old Teſtament, that "through faith have ob-"tained a good report;" it merits your obſervation how many we read of in the New, who, for the duties of devotedneſs to their Saviour, the liberalities of reſpect to his

his perſon, and even the heroiſm of zeal in his cauſe, are marked out with a pre-eminence perfectly diſtinguiſhable.

When of his apoſtles the moſt ſanguine had denied, had even forſworn, and all the reſt had forſaken him and fled; we find thoſe faithful and gentle creatures ſurrounding his croſs with lamentations, which they were neither aſhamed nor affraid to avow. Never ſure did female tears appear more graceful. Nor were they merely that tranſient flow of mechanical grief, ſo eaſily furniſhed by too many eyes, where the heart has little or no ſhare in the ſoft effuſion. The love which thoſe devout daughters of Jeruſalem bore to their maſter, nothing could extinguiſh. Who has not read that affecting ſtory of the viſit to his ſepulchre, paid by the pious Maries and their little company, together with the kind, generous, and, as it might have proved, very hazardous purpoſe which produced it? Their ſetting out alone, at ſo early an hour, while it was yet dark, to engage in ſo ſolemn a ſcene, afforded a

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ſtriking proof of the courage and conſtancy with which their piety had inſpired them, amidſt all that ſpirits like theirs muſt have ſuffered from ſo many circumſtances of ſorrow. In their countenances, words and geſtures on that occaſion, I think I read the painful, yet amiable emotions, that wrought in their tender throbbing hearts. I am particularly charmed with the eager anxiety, and beautiful diſtreſs of Mary Magdalene, whoſe gratitude for the tranſcendent mercies ſhe had received, did then flame out with ſuch uncommon fervour. While I contemplate the whole tranſaction, with the conduct that preceded it, I cannot but admire that juſtice, which in preference to all others, honoured thoſe excellent women with being the firſt witneſſes and publiſhers of Chriſt's reſurrection, or as an ancient writer has expreſſed it, Apoſtles to the Apoſtles themſelves. A very natural, as it is in effect a moſt memorable atteſtation to their ſuperior attachment, and unconquerable fidelity. Surely it was not in vain, that the annals of inſpiration have regiſtered thoſe pleaſing facts with

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ſuch particularity. There they ſtand, and will for ever ſtand, illuſtrious monuments of female worth, in a conjuncture moſt peculiarly trying, and of the extraordinary approbation it met with from him, in whoſe ſight devotion and perſeverance, affection and faith, will always out-ſhine the more ſhowy qualities that fill the world with hiſtory and wonder.

I ſhould have mentioned, before this, the friendſhip of Jeſus to the ſiſters of Lazarus, his applauſe of the woman of Canaan, and his pathetic addreſs to the women who followed him weeping, while he carried his croſs. It is likewiſe worthy of remark, that of all the diſciples, he who ſeems, in a certain divine ſweetneſs of diſpoſition, to have reſembled him moſt, directed one of thoſe epiſtles, which make a part of our Scriptures, to a Lady, a perſon of diſtinction, much reſpected by him and all the believers of that time for her eminent piety, and that of her children.

And

And now, if, with encouragements like theſe to the love of God and of your Saviour, any of you, my fair auditory, ſhould live in forgetfulneſs of both, what ſhall we ſay of ſuch, but that they are deſtitute of true ambition, and totally inſenſible to the moſt diſtinguiſhing favours of heaven?

But, perhaps, we ſhall be told, that thoſe perpetual flatteries which many of you meet with from men on account of its inferior gifts, ſuch as youth, beauty, fancy, ſprightlineſs, prevent or deſtroy thoſe better ſentiments which you might be otherwiſe diſpoſed to cultivate. I doubt it not. But, do not you plead this as an excuſe? Your ſituation, we have granted all along, ſubjects you to temptations in particular inſtances. But, we have now ſeen, that it frees you from other very dangerous ſnares, and includes the moſt powerful attractives to your duty. What are you to infer from the whole, but that you ought to avail yourſelves of theſe advantages, for fortify-

ing and guarding you wherever you lie expoſed?

I have juſt named what appears to me your ſex's weakeſt ſide. To arm you on that, I have had opportunities of offering a variety of precautions. I now add, and it ſhall be my laſt conſideration on this occaſion, that Revelation concurs with Reaſon to furniſh the ſtrongeſt weapons of defence againſt that adulation, which is ſo great an enemy to your ſouls.

That your ſouls are immortal is probable from reaſon, and certain from Revelation. But the arguments from either I hold it unneceſſary to propoſe here. To attempt the conviction of female infidels falls not within my preſent deſign. Indeed, I fear it were a hopeleſs undertaking. That preposterous vanity, and that open or ſecret profligacy, by which they have been warped into ſcepticiſm, would in all likelihood baffle any endeavours of mine. If they are not, however, ſo far gone in that unhappy ſyſtem, as to be reſolved againſt all ſober

ſober inquiry, I would earneſtly recommend to their peruſal a few of the many excellent writings, which this age and country have produced in favour of religion both natural and revealed. At the ſame time I would juſt remind them, that the daring and diſputatious ſpirit of unbelief is utterly repugnant to the female ſoftneſs, and to that amiable docility, which, in their ſex, is ſo peculiarly pleaſing to ours; not to mention that from an infidel partner, a man can have no proſpect of conſolation in thoſe hours of diſtreſs, when the hopes of futurity can alone adminiſter relief.—— To you, my Chriſtian hearers, I was going to obſerve, that the ſtedfaſt and ſerious belief of immortality, as pointed out in your frame, and brought to light by the Goſpel, will excite ſuch a mighty concern to ſecure its grand intereſts, ſuch a high ſenſe of your internal dignity, ſuch a predominant ambition of being acceptable in His eye, who can make you happy or wretched for ever, as muſt neceſſarily leſſen in your's every external and periſhing advantage.

If you are really poſſeſſed by thoſe principles, he that from ſpiritual and everlaſting objects would turn your chief regard to ſkin-deep and ſhort lived allurements, will ſurely, in a moment of recollection at leaſt, be looked upon by you as a tempter to be ſhunned. That pride of life, which in the eye of folly ſwells into ſuch importance, will ſhrink and fade away into its native littleneſs in her eſtimation, whoſe thoughts are often entertained with the magnificence and ſplendor of eternal things. To that young woman, who like her of Bethany, "has choſen the good part," who meekly penſive ſits at the feet of Jeſus, and with delighted reverence hears his words; the inſinuation of the vicious, the impertinence of the vain, in ſhort, whatever would rob her of her portion, or obſtruct her enjoying it, will not, I think, be over pleaſing. To her the care of her ſalvation is the one thing needful. Compared with that, even the beſt things of this world appear, what, indeed, they are, but trifles; in which, becauſe the condition of mortality makes it unavoidable, ſhe ſhares with cheerfulneſs,

but

but in which ſhe ſhares with moderation too, becauſe ſhe has buſineſs to mind of infinite moment.

"What ſhall it profit a man, if he ſhall "gain the whole world, and loſe his own ſoul?" The queſtion was aſked by him, who knew right well the value of both. Had he aſked, "What ſhall it profit a Woman, "if ſhe ſhall gain the whole world, and "loſe her own ſoul?" would the ſtate of the queſtion have been altered? You will not ſay it. Weighed againſt a ſoul, the empire of the earth were duſt in the balance. What then ſhall we call thoſe things, for which ſinners are daily forfeiting their ſaltion? Tell me, ye flattered fair ones, what is the worth of praiſe or admiration from knaves, or from fools, for which ſo many of your are ready to forfeit yours? Ye daughters of vanity, tell me, what will dreſs, or ſhow, or gaiety of any kind, where God and goodneſs are neglected, "profit in the "day of wrath?" In that day of diſcovery and deciſion, what will appearances avail? ——Give me back theſe laſt ſentences: I

had forgotten: Dreſs, ſhow, gaiety, appearance, will be then no more.—But hold; before we look ſo far, let us ſee what they can perform now.

They can attract attention; they can allure deſire; they can excite encomium, deceive the unwary, and captivate the weak, for a little. But inform us, ye boaſted beauties, who are told every day of your power, what permanent eſſential good can it procure? Bring it to the proof. Bid the ſun that meaſures your days ſtand ſtill; command the current of time that hurries you along, to ſtop; ſay to wrinkled age, to fell diſeaſe, to grim death, Approach me not, ye frightful forms. Alas! they are deaf as the adder, and ſtubborn as the rock. Try then your influence in ſome leſſer things. Make the experiment on the head-ach: enjoin it to be gone. It goes not. But, perhaps, the head-ach may hear, and obey: your inward feelings at leaſt ſhould be under your controul. But you have given them the rein; nor will they be checked on a ſudden. While you have

have thought only of conquering other hearts, you have ſuffered headſtrong paſſions to conquer your own. Summon then your worſhippers and order them to interpoſe; ſee if by all their incenſe, and all their zeal, they can keep you young in ſpite of years, or make you glad in ſpite of affliction. They are ſilent. Aſk them, if they will undertake to die for you? They retire. Call after them—"Will you anſwer for us "at the judgment-day?"—Again that awful period ruſhes on the mind. Ah, my friends, what will you do then without Religion? The thought is big with horror. Then, then it ſhall be ſeen, what an evidence bright and terrible as the funeral fire of nature, that, "beauty is deceitful and "favour is vain."—But, what means that univerſal ſhout of human and angelic voices? What words are thoſe, which I hear reſounding through the aſſembly of the univerſe? "A woman that feareth the Lord, "She ſhall be praiſed!"

SER.

SERMON XI.

On Female Devotion and Good Works.

1 TIM. ii. 8, 9, 10.

I will that Women adorn themſelves in modeſt apparel, with ſhamefacedneſs and ſobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or coſtly array, but (which becometh women profeſſing Godlineſs) with Good Works.

YOU have ſeen a venerable matron incircled with a race of lovely daughters, all different from one another, yet all marked with an air of mutual reſemblance, and taking jointly after their honoured parent, to whom from time to time they direct their looks with dutiful attention; while ſhe ſmiles on each by turns, ſuperintends their behaviour, preſcribes their ſeveral occupations, encourages them in every thing praiſe-worthy, and, with a proper regard to their reſpective talents and diſpoſitions, trains them to growing excellence. In her, my fair ones, you behold

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an emblem of religion. Thus is that moſt dignified of all forms ſurrounded by the Virtues, her beautiful offspring; thus do they bear the lineaments of their common deſcent, and near affinity; and thus—But, I leave you to trace the particulars of the ſimilitude. The general truth on which it is founded ſeems plainly intimated in our text, where Godlineſs is aſſumed as the leading principle of all that the Apoſtle inculcates on women. As women profeſſing Chriſtianity he addreſſes them; and, whatever a conſiſtency which that profeſſion demands, he would be underſtood to enjoin. He mentions particularly modeſt apparel, ſhamefacedneſs, ſobriety and Good Works. It now remains to enforce the laſt of theſe, together with thoſe kind affections which they pre-ſuppoſe; to touch as we go along on their Connexion with the Principle which gives them birth; and, then as briefly as poſſible, to ſhow in what manner that Principle may be cultivated with moſt ſucceſs.

But,

But, before we proceed, truth requires one mortifying obſervation. It is this, that amongſt the many women profeſſing godlineſs, the number of thoſe that practiſe it is comparatively ſmall. In all profeſſions, indeed, the mere pretenders will ever be numerous. They will be moſt ſo, in thoſe that are at once reputable and difficult. That of religion, as was formerly remarked, is approved of in your ſex, even by ſuch as laugh at it in ours. At the ſame time, it is certain, that when the habits of piety have not been very early acquired, and very happily directed, by means of a wiſe education, the rareſt as well as the greateſt of bleſſings, the forming them afterwards will always prove a taſk too arduous, and painful, for the generality of thoſe who are bred to diſſipation and pleaſure.

But then, on the other hand, where this divine principle is cultivated with care and judgment, it is no leſs certain, that we may expect from it the moſt valuable fruits. And, firſt, I ſay, that a young woman

man profeſſing Godlineſs with underſtanding, and from choice, will never be wanting in the great article of Filial Duty. On this ſubject, as on many others, the ſubtility of ſpeculation has put caſes, which there is little probability of happening in life. But, where caſuiſtry is not neceſſary, it is apt to be hurtful, by involving the mind in perplexity and diſtreſs, if not warping the heart from that rectitude and ſimplicity, which, next to the immediate illumination of heaven, are the ſureſt guides to a worthy conduct.

Of filial duty in all its branches, ſhe will naturally acquit herſelf beſt, who has the deepeſt ſenſe of religion. "Keep thy fa-
"ther's commandment, and forſake not the
"law of thy mother. Bind them conti-
"nually upon thine heart, and tie them
"about thy neck. When thou goeſt, it
"ſhall lead thee; when thou ſleepeſt it
"ſhall keep thee; and, when thou wakeſt,
"it ſhall talk with thee. Whoſo revileth
"his father, or his mother, his lamp ſhall
"be put out in obſcure darkneſs. The
"eye

"eye that mocketh at his father, and de-
"ſpiſeth to obey his mother, the ravens of
"the valley ſhall pick it out, and the young
"eagels ſhall eat it." Jeſus was ſubject unto his parents. "Children, obey your
"parents in the Lord: for this is right.
"Honour thy father and mother (which
"is the firſt commandment with pro-
"miſe) that it may be well with thee,
"and thou mayeſt live long on the earth."
All this a Chriſtian daughter has read with attention, and reflects upon with awe. It correſponds, in ſubſtance, with the inſtinct of nature, which it contributes at once to corroborate and exalt. She who truly reverences her parent in heaven, would tremble at the thought of diſhonouring his repreſentatives on earth. From their authority ſhe has acquired the idea of his; and this laſt, including all that can be conceived of great and good, is the commanding idea of her life. If your parents are, indeed, pious, and you have profited by their inſtruction and example; how will your natural reſpect for them be heightened by religious gratitude! You will think

of

of them with ſecret rapture, as the inſtruments of a happy and immortal exiſtence; your devouteſt prayers for their preſervation and comfort will daily aſcend to the throne of God. Thoſe prayers will, at the ſame inſtant, cheriſh the affections by which they are prompted, and ſtrengthen your reſolutions, never, for any conſideration, to tranſgreſs the laws of filial piety. For, how could they bear to be the wilful authors of pain to thoſe, for whoſe felicity they are led by every motive to preſent every day the moſt fervent ſupplications?

But, many of you have not the happineſs of ſuch parents as I have ſuppoſed. I am heartily ſorry for it. But, the want of principle in your parents will not diſſolve the ties of duty, however it may affect the ſentiments of eſteem: and, if you think rightly, it will only excite your endeavours, by every winning reſpectable way, to promote their reformation; for which, you will at the ſame time offer up, from the depth of retirement, your ſighs and vows to Him who has the hearts of all in his hand.

In truth, I am inclined to believe, that if there be any one thing more likely than another to draw down the garce of converſion on a parent, it is ſuch a conduct in a child. Ah, my young friends, what honour and joy would in this caſe be yours! What a noble ſuperiority to thoſe unfeeling creatures of your ſex, who ſhow no ſolicitude with regard to their parents, but how to obtain from them ſome new article of dreſs, or other gratification, on which they have fixed their fooliſh fancies!

But, ſome of you complain, that your parents are cruel and tyrannical. I ſympathize with you yet more, if your complaint is juſt. But, what do you mean by Cruel and Tyrannical? That they will not indulge your extravagant vanity, or that they chooſe to reſtrain you from purſuits, which they are apprehenſive would be hurtful? It is a wiſe and a kind ſeverity, if ſeverity it muſt be termed. How much are you indebted to them for preventing, by a little temporary mortification, real and permanent infelicity! Not to ſay, that

that a ſmall degree of delicacy and conſideration would teach you to ſpare them in points where your ſtations and their circumſtances concur, it may be, to render your requeſts particularly improper.

But, I will ſuppoſe the worſt, that they are really hard-hearted, and unnaturally rigid. It is a mighty trial. To bear it well, will require all the fortitude of faith. Here then is an opportunity for diſplaying your principles in their utmoſt power. You are called forth to the conflict, as into a field of battle where even your ſex may reap immortal laurels. She is a heroine indeed, whoſe regard for her parents no unkindneſs of theirs can conquer.

But they would force you to ſacrifice your happineſs to a man whom you cannot love. There your ſubmiſſion is to ſtop. No rules of duty can oblige you to involve yourſelves in miſery and temptation, by entering into engagements to love and to honour, where your hearts with-hold their conſent.—Barbarous wretches, and baſe,

to offer thus to diſpoſe of your children, as you would of your cattle, to the higheſt bidder; to attempt, againſt every maxim of Nature and Religion, to drag the reluctant victims to the alter, and compel them, in the moſt ſolemn manner, to profeſs what they do not mean, and to vow what they cannot perform.

I am willing, however, to believe, that ſuch compulſion is uſed but ſeldom. The greteaſt danger is, leſt you, my unexperienced friends, ſhould be tempted to form the moſt important of all connexions, without the approbation of your parents.—What ſhall we ſay in ſuch a caſe? Where the reſolution is once formed, he that would undertake, by any methods of diſſuaſion, to prevent its being executed, might as well propoſe to check a torrent ruſhing from the top of a mountain. But, we would addreſs you while in your ſober ſenſes; that is, before your imagination is perverted and inflamed. Be aſſured, my young hearers, the ſtep in queſtion is very ſeldom taken, but it is ſincerely repented;

pented; with this bitter addition, that ſuch repentance can do no good. The paſſion that guided and hurries the parties is quickly abated. There is nothing ſo tranſient, as the enthuſiam of mere youthful lovers after marriage. And now, that reflexions take place, and conſequences begin to preſs; a thouſand improprieties, fears, and diſquietudes, unthought of before, riſe up to view, and quite diſenchant our romatic adventurers. It is wonderful, indeed, what appearances of firmneſs and ſatisfaction a woman in ſuch a ſituation will wear before the world, in order to juſtify her choice. But ſurely, unhappineſs is not leſſened by being devoured in ſecret, and in public diſguiſed. Perpetual reſtraint is perpetual wretchedneſs. Allow me to repeat it. Under the immediate impulſe of a violent attachment, I ſhould hardly give you or myſelf the trouble to argue: but, while you are diſengaged and calm, it may not be amiſs to remind you, that a parent, generally ſpeaking, is much more likely to judge with ſoundneſs for a daughter, than ſhe is for

herſelf; that Fancy alone is too ſanguine a counſellor to be a prudent one; that proteſtations of eternal fidelity, of uninterrupted affection, made in the heat of blood, have no ſolid baſis; in a word, that the deliberate advice, which is dictated alike by length of days, knowledge of the world, and earneſt ſolicitude for a child's welfare, ought to be relied upon, rather than the haſty concluſions of juvenile deſire.

It is certain, after all, that the wiſeſt parents may be miſtaken about the man they wiſh a daughter to be connected with. But ſhe, that marries with the ſanction of their countenance, will from thence, and from their continued or even increaſed kindneſs, derive, in the caſe of diſappointment, a conſolation which ſhe could not enjoy, had ſhe brought it on herſelf by her own indiſcretion and obſtinacy.

One thing here muſt not be forgotten; that the reflexion of having acted undutifully in this or any other inſtance of importance,

tance, to thoſe who gave you birth, were alone ſufficient to poiſon the whole pleaſure of life; that is, if you are not loſt to every ingenuous impreſſion; but eſpecially ſhould their death put it for ever out of your power to make atonement. The horrors of guilt, that in ſuch a circumſtance are apt to haunt and diſtract the mind, more particularly if the parents were uncommonly worthy, I have had repeated opportunities of obſerving, but have not adequate language to expreſs; ſo profound is the conviction implanted by Nature of the ſacredneſs of filial piety! Need I add, that this extends ſo far as to demand ſubmiſſion in every caſe, where your duty to God or your peace of mind does not interfere?

But, it is not ſubmiſſion alone that is demanded; nor will ſhe prove in any relation an amiable character, who does not ſhow herſelf an affectionate daughter. On the other hand, when a young woman behaves to her parents in a manner particularly reſpectful and tender, I mean from principle

principle as well as nature, there is nothing good or gentle that may not be expected from her, in whatever condition ſhe is placed. Of this I am perſuaded ſo thoroughly, that, were I to adviſe any friend of mine as to his choice of a wife, I know not whether my very firſt counſel would not be, "Look out for one diſtinguiſhed by "her attention and ſweetneſs to her pa-"rents." The fund of worth and affection indicated by ſuch a behaviour, joined to the habits of duty and conſideration thereby contracted, being transferred to the married ſtate, will not fail to render her a mild and obliging companion.

Your ſituation in life, which keeps you more at home than ſons, together with the turn of your education, and the ſoftneſs of your frame, that fit you for a thouſand little ſoothing offices, as well as domeſtic ſervices, which they cannot properly perform, ſeems to point out to you a peculiar ſphere of filial excellence.—And, here I pleaſe myſelf with the thought, that ſome of your boſoms are at this moment beating with

with tenderneſs towards a ſick or aged parent, whom heaven, willing to furniſh a field for the exerciſe of all your gratitude and zeal, has at laſt thrown upon your care. I think I ſee you, my charming friend, like ſome guardian angel, tending day and night the bed of an honoured father, who has loſt your mother, and who is worn out with toil, and years, and pain. I ſee you liſtening, in deepeſt ſilence, to catch the leaſt intimation of his wiſhes. I ſee you watching eagerly every look, to learn his wants before he ſpeaks them; now gently raiſing his lanquid head to ſmooth the billow, or miniſter ſome reviving cordial; and then wiping from his reverend face the cold ſweats, that begin perhaps to announce the approach of his end. His groans are anſwered by ſighs ſtealing from you, but ſuddenly ſuppreſſed, for fear of adding to his anxiety on your account. To be the inſtrument of imparting to him a minute's comfort, a minute's eaſe, is rapture. Mean while the good old man's eyes are now turned to you, with all the unutterable fondneſs of paternal

love,

love, melted by thoſe marks of duty; anon they are lifted to heaven in thankſgiving for ſuch a child, and ſupplication for everlaſting bleſſings on your head.——Great God! what muſt a mind like yours experience in this conjuncture? Where is the daughter of Diſobedience and Folly, that ever felt, in the gayeſt hour, a ſatisfaction, a tranſport to be compared with that, which conſcious piety diffuſes through your bleeding heart? Nor will theſe exalted ſenſations be at all diminiſhed, if (Providence having denied the ſupplies which affluence gives) your virtue has prompted you by your labour or ingenuity, or, it may be, by parting with ſome admired ornament worn in your better days, to procure for a parent in thoſe circumſtances neceſſary ſupport, or ſeaſonable refreſhment.

Let me next ſay ſomewhat concerning Siſterly affection. "Behold how good "and how pleaſant it is for brethren, "and ſiſters, to dwell together in unity!" Precious ointment is not more grateful to the ſmell, nor morning due more refreſh-

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ing to the ſight, than domeſtic love is to the ſoul. Repreſent to yourſelves a numerous young family, free from care and animoſity, full of reverence for their Maker and their parents, ambicious to pleaſe and excel; in a word, pious, dutiful, friendly, happy; where the good humour and good ſenſe of each, contribute to the caſe and entertainment of all; while thoſe agreeable diverſities of temper and underſtanding that take place amongſt them, ſerve, like diſcords in muſic, to carry on the intellectual harmony. Who would not wiſh to be acquainted in ſuch a houſe; who would not conſider it as the abode of felicity? I hope, I paint no unuſual ſcene.

Where the members are but few, felicity perhaps is not ſo often found; unleſs it be in the more ſhady walks of life, where love and innocence delight to frequent. And, why is it not? When I ſee two ſiſters, both of them pleaſing and both eſteemed, living together without jealouſy or envy, yielding to one another without affectation, and generally contending who

ſhall

ſhall do moſt to advance the conſequence and happineſs of her friend; I am highly delighted: dare I add, the more highly, that ſuch characters are not very common. And, why are they not? The love of a ſiſter for her brothers is much more uſual. Whence too does this proceed? Examine your own hearts on theſe ſeveral points. Poſſibly they can explain to you the difference, ſo obſervable where there is a competition, and where there is none, or where any tendencies towards it are happily loſt in the involutions of a large number.

Martha of Bethany was on the whole a worthy woman. She certainly loved her Saviour with ſincere devotion. Her ſolicitude to entertain him in the beſt manner ſhe could think of, was the reſult of her reſpect. But it was carried to an extreme; and her ſiſter's conduct ſhould have taught her wiſdom. Inſtead of this, ſhe grows peeviſh, and complains of that ſiſter. She is admoniſhed of her fault, while Mary is commended for her better behaviour. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and

"troubled

"troubled about many things: but one "thing is needful; and Mary hath choſen "that good part which ſhall not be taken "away from her." What pity that any tincture of ill-humour, under whatever diſguiſe, ſhould have place in any breaſt where Jeſus is revered! Surely there is nothing more beautiful in a Chriſtian Woman, than good temper and kind affections upon all occaſions.

I was once acquainted with a lady who ſeemed to be held up by Providence, as an example of the joint power of theſe and of divine principles. She loſt her father early. Her mother's want of health made it neceſſary for her to exert herſelf with double aſſiduity and attention, in a family by no means ſmall, of which ſhe was the eldeſt child. She was naturally active, to a degree very uncommon in one of her diſpoſition, which was the ſofteſt and meekeſt that can be conceived. She had imbibed from her infancy the deepeſt ſenſe of devotion, that I have ever known. It was a devotion of that kind which, meeting with a

heart originally upright, produces uniform excellence. Such excellence was her's. When, in the courſe of a few years, her extraordinary character recommended her to the choice of a man of ſingular worth and good fortune; ſhe did not, with the ſelfiſhneſs common on ſuch occaſions, forget her mother or the family ſhe had left behind her; but continued, with the entire approbation and cordial concurrence of her huſband, to manifeſt her filial and ſiſterly regards in the moſt effectual manner. She was none of theſe narrow ſouled women, who no ſooner ſtep into houſes of their own, than they ſeem to have all their affections and ideas abſorbed in their new condition; relinquiſhing at once the beſt companions of their youth; dropping the pen of friendly correſpondence, and ſhrinking up into a little wretched circle of anxieties, that exclude every liberal ſentiment, and every enlarged connexion. When the mother of this lady died, which happened not long after ſhe became a mother to the helpleſs orphans, ſhe ſuperintended their education, watched over their deportment,

promoted

promoted their ſettlement in the world, and ſympathized with them in all their diſtreſſes. When they alſo ſpread out into families, ſhe acted like a parent to their children—To her own, of whom ſhe had many—Bleſſed Lord, what a parent! Was it poſſible for them not to love one another with ſuch a pattern before them, and with ſuch inſtructions as ſhe gave them? For they too were deprived of their father, while the greater part were very young. Her inſtructions were pious and wiſe: but it was not her example, it was that ineffable charm of humble worth and modeſt dignity, of maternal complaiſance and mildneſs almoſt unparalleled, which rendered them irreſiſtible, and diffuſed amongſt all about her, the ſpirit of amity and the ſmile of happineſs. You will not be ſurpriſed, if I ſubjoin, that there were many other families who ſhared in her labours of love, and amongſt the reſt a very large one, the poor; whoſe bleſſings attended her through life, and whoſe tears followed her to the grave: for, when ſhe died, they had alſo loſt a mother. It is hard to ſay, upon the whole, whether ſhe

was moſt beloved, or venerated, by thoſe who knew her. But, I uſed to think, that, where-ever ſhe appeared, her preſence inſpired ſenſations ſomewhat like thoſe we ſhould probably feel, if we beheld a good angel.

And thus, I come naturally to ſpeak of Good Works in a comprehenſive view; that is, thoſe which proceed from kindneſs and compaſſion in general. When ſuch diſpoſitions predominate, let it be obſerved, in the firſt place, that they are ingenious to diſcover, and diligent to improve, thoſe ways and means of beneficence which paſs unregarded by the giddy and unfeeling. Many of you, my honoured audience, have it not in your power, through the obſcurity of your ſituation, and the ſtraitneſs of your circumſtances, to indulge the generous propenſions of your nature. While thouſands of your ſex are inflamed with the emulation of beauty, or agitated by the conflict of rivalſhip, or miſerable becauſe they cannot be gratified with ſuch an article of ſhow, or admitted into ſuch a party of pleaſure;

ſure; you are ſighing, becauſe not able more extenſively to ſuccour indigence, or more effectually to comfort ſorrow. Your ſighs, beloved, are heard in heaven; your wiſhes are regiſtered there under the head of Virtues; the willing mind is accepted now and ſhall be recompenſed at the reſurrection of the juſt; your leaſt good deed ſhall not be forgotten by Him who marked and applauded the widow's mite. "Who-"ſoever ſhall give to drink" unto a follower of Jeſus, "a cup of cold water only, "in the name of a diſciple, verily, I ſay un-"to you, he ſhall in no wiſe loſe his re-"ward." You ſhall be eſtimated by the largeneſs of your hearts, not by the ſize of your fortunes. "The liberal ſoul that de-"viſeth liberal things," that executes what it can, and ſtops only where it muſt, or rather goes on panting and praying for that happineſs to the human race, which it cannot have the joy of imparting;—how honourable in the ſight of God!

Let me remind you farther of what ought alſo to ſolace you amidſt all your kind cares.

Human happineſs is made up of many little ingredients, with a few principal ones; and, next to religion, thoſe in reality contribute to it moſt largely, who give the greateſt conſolation by their ſympathy, and the greateſt pleaſure by their friendſhip. Friendſhip and ſympathy, when thoroughly awake, are conſtantly employed in numberleſs pleaſing ſervices, and amiable attentions, to which language cannot appropriate names; but which the heart of the perſon obliged feels, and which rebounds with redoubled delight on the heart of the perſon obliging. I go farther, and ſay, that the very idea of your being diſpoſed to oblige, is obligation; becauſe, it is in itſelf agreeable, and we are indebted to every one that ſupplies us with an agreeable idea.

And then, who has not remarked, that, in doing benevolent things, there is, both as to the time and the manner, a propriety which gives ineſtimable value even to the leaſt? The manner, in particular, is of marvellous effect. A charitable action gracefully done, is twice done. To ſome people one

one would be willing to owe almoſt every thing, ſo handſomely do they confer a kindneſs; while from others a favour, for the oppoſite reaſon, is a load. But who ſo capable of delighting by the manner, yet more than by the deed itſelf, as a lovely young woman, whoſe words, and ſmiles, and ſoftneſs, are to the laſt of theſe, what a beautiful ſymphony and judicious accompaniment in muſic are to a well managed voice?

But, in truth, the advantages which your ſex and age afford you in this divine employment of doing good, are not to be expreſſed. Would to God your zeal were but in proportion to it!——Forgive me, Proteſtants, if, on this occaſion, I here remark with concern, how far many of you are out-done by multitudes in the church of Rome, eſpecially amongſt her female votaries. Their frequent viſits to the abodes of misfortune and pain, of poverty and ſickneſs, their gentle miniſtrations to the ſufferers, their ſtooping ſo meekly to the meaneſt offices of compaſſion; offices of which

which the moſt diſtant thought would ſhock the falſe refinement of a gay lady, place them, I muſt own, to me, amidſt all the errors of their faith, in a point of light highly reſpectable and engaging. Who can help me to a reaſon, why a practice ſo Chriſt-like is not adopted in this country where the Goſpel is profeſſed in ſo much purity? Are we afraid of being thought to embrace the doctrine of good Merit by good works, entertained in that church? It cannot be, amongſt thoſe who have learnt the truth as it is in Jeſus. None ſurely was ever more ſelf-denied on this head than St Paul; yet St Paul was a flame of charity. In his doctrine, and in his conduct, grace and virtue, faith and good works, went hand in hand, inſeparable and triumphant.

Ah, ye fair ones of Britain, who doat on the parade of public aſſemblies, and ſail along in the full blown pride of faſhionable attire, of which the leaſt appendage or circumſtance muſt not be diſcompoſed: thoughtleſs of human wo; inſenſible to modeſt

modeſt worth at that moment pining in many a ſolitary reſidence of want——What ſhall I ſay more? Ye gaudy flutterers, "with hard hearts under ſoft raiment," as one has well expreſſed it; how much more brilliant and beautiful would you appear in the eye of ſaints and angels, were you now and then to exchange thoſe ſcenes of ſelfiſh ſplendor for the gloomy dwellings of wretchedneſs, in order to light them up by your pity and beneficence! I bluſh for many of my countrywomen, poſſeſſed of fortune, who have never yet learnt its nobleſt and happieſt uſe; in whoſe ears the circulated whiſper of a well-dreſſed croud admiring their appearance, is a more grateful ſound than the praiſe of widows and orphans ſharing their bounty; who prefer the empty breath of adulation to the bleſſings of them that were ready to periſh.

God be thanked, there are exceptions. Among the reſt, I recollect, with peculiar pleaſure, one lady of rank, whoſe name is never mentioned by thoſe who know her, without calling up the image of Charity; who,

who, having no family of her own, has adopted the indigent and deſerving; whoſe whole life, not a ſhort one, has been devoted to munificence; who, in a word, ſeems to regard her wealth merely as a fund depoſited in her hands by the Almighty, to be laid out with the ſtricteſt faithfulneſs for the god-like purpoſe of making thouſands happy. Exalted creature! how honourable, independent of thy birth; how bleſſed, to underſtand ſo well the deſtination of riches! A rare, and, as it ſhould ſeem! from this circumſtance, a difficult ſcience!—Juſtly might the poet exclaim,

"The rich muſt labour to poſſeſs their own,
"To feel their great abundance; and re-
"queſt
"Their humble friends to help them to be
"bleſt;
"To ſee their treaſures, hear their glory
"told,
"And aid the wretched impotence of gold."

He

He adds indeed,

" But ſome, great ſouls! and touch'd with
" warmth divine,
" Give gold a price, and teach its beams
" to ſhine.
" All hoarded treaſures they repute a load;
" Nor think their wealth their own, till
" well beſtow'd."

Amongſt the properties of the Virtuous Woman, in that celebrated paſſage formerly ſurveyed, it is ſaid, " She ſtretcheth " forth her hand to the poor, and reach- " eth her hand to the needy:" On which it has been remarked, that after her induſtry for the acquiring of wealth is deſcribed, her liberality is next mentioned, as being the principal uſe ſhe made of it, and precedes her providing ſcarlet for her houſehold, or fine linen and purple for herſelf— What ſhall we call thoſe women, who either never think of the poor at all, or never till they have firſt ſacrificed to ſuperfluity and pride?

Where

Where are thoſe female penitents of this land, that, like her of Judea, convert the inſtruments of their former folly and extravagance in matter of humiliation and piety; that conſecrate, ſo to ſpeak, the ſpoils of Vice, by offering them at the feet of their Saviour, while they proſtrate themſelves there in deep contrition? The poor they have always with them, and by ſhowing mercy to them they may at once ſhow their reſpect for Him, and help to inſure mercy for themſelves.

It is worthy your obſervation, that in the liſt of female names recorded in Scripture with renown, that of Tabitha ſtands marked with a particular note of approbation, as, "a diſciple who was full of Good "Works, and Alms which ſhe did." What a glorious memorial! And what additional honour does it receive from the account immediately following! This excellent woman dies. An apoſtle is in the neighbourhood. He is ſent for in haſte; he arrives; he is conducted to the chamber of the deceaſed. Her female friends ſtand by

by him "weeping, and ſhewing him the "coats and garments which ſhe had made "for the poor." How natural a circumſtance; and how eloquent! He felt it; "kneeled down and prayed, and turning "him to the body, ſaid," with a voice of power, "Tabitha, ariſe;" working a miracle to reſtore a life ſo uſeful. From this amiable perſon's being denominated in the hiſtory a Diſciple, I would only remark, that, in thoſe days, a Chriſtian was known and characterized by real excellence, whereas every thing now is a Chriſtian, not excepting her, who never, but when forced, went into the houſe of mourning; never knew the joy of giving purely for the love of God, without expecting any thing again; let me add, never denied herſelf one trapping of Vanity to clothe the naked, nor one indulgence of Luxury to feed the hungry.—Alas! my poor friend, what wilt thou ſay for thyſelf at the tribunal of Jeſus? I leave with thee that queſtion; anſwer it to thy conſcience, as in the preſence of thy judge. You have read the proceſs which He will obſerve.

On theſe points it was eaſy to enlarge at great length, and with exact method. I am willing, however, to hope, that, by the grace of God, a few hints thus thrown out with plainneſs and affection, may ſuffice to every mind, this is open to the ſentiments of humanity; but eſpecially to every heart that is impreſſed with the principles of religion. And here, I am led, to

My laſt point, which was to ſhow, in what manner thoſe Principles may be Cultivated with moſt ſucceſs. It is difficult to ſay, whether the inſtrumental duties of religion, as they are uſually termed, have been more miſrepreſented by ſuperſtition and hypocriſy on one hand, or by vicious refinement and vain philoſophy on the other. By the former they have been extolled, as if they were the whole of religion; while the latter have decried them as vulgar, unavailing, and inſignificant. The real truth is, that they are not only a part of religion, but an eſſential and important part of it; eſſential, as expreſſing its ſeveral affections, and important, as nouriſhing and maintaining

maintaining them; eſſential, as a direct compliance with the divine authority, and important, as rendering ſuch compliance, more ready and habitual.

Habits, we all know, are formed by many reiterated acts; and if theſe are diſcontinued, thoſe will in time be loſt. As good impreſſions are at firſt produced by proper attention, ſo, if this is ſuſpended, they will ſoon fade from the mind; and the ſooner, no doubt, that many of them at leaſt were produced there in oppoſition to appetite, faſhion, and the maxims of the world. Even friendſhip itſelf, which has originally ſo powerful a hold of the human heart, is not to be preſerved alive, without that interchange of words and actions, if the parties are near; or, that commerce of thoughts and wiſhes, if they are not, to which it naturally inclines. What could you expect from him, who ſhould profeſs to entertain an affection for you, and yet teſtify no deſire of your company, take no delight in your converſation, or, if abſent, never inquire after you? Religion is a Di-

vine Friendſhip, to be begun and continued nearly in the ſame manner with that which is Human; making allowance ſtill for the infinite diſparity between the Creator and the creature, between the Sovereign Spirit all pure and perfect, and a dependent mind embodied and frail.

In cultivating a friendſhip which you wiſhed to be thorough and laſting, you would often ſtep aſide from the croud to enjoy the freedom of undiſturbed converſe; you would lay open your heart with confidence to the object beloved, liſten to each communication with pleaſure, enter more and more into the ſame conceptions, exchange every poſſible mark of eſteem, and, in the end, eſtabliſh an union of intereſts and of ſouls alike cloſe and tender. Now, here we have ſome reſemblance of private devotion. It is not my deſign to purſue this reſemblance through its ſeveral parts; neither do I pretend to ſay, that it holds minutely in every one of them: but the general ground is clear to her who believes in an omnipreſent Deity, and knows that between minds

minds there may be an intercourſe independent of the ſenſes. The application can only be learnt by practice, and much practice too.

It will not be learnt by thoſe who have no reliſh for retirement. The Almighty's voice muſt be often attended to in the ſilence of the paſſions, and the ſecrecy of the ſoul. Thoſe are yet ſtrangers to their Maker, who cannot endure to think of him, or do not love to turn to him, when alone. Is the reverſe of this your caſe, my dear hearers? Are your meditations of God ſweet? Does your heart go out after him, as its beſt and greateſt object? Is it your joy to pour it forth into his paternal boſom? Do you frequently find the exerciſe ſo delightful, as to quit it with unwillingneſs? Do you generally perceive your ſentiments raiſed and refined by it, your ideas of your duty quickened and enlarged, your deteſtation of the contrary confirmed and heightened, your reſolutions invigorated of courſe, your gratitude, humility, meekneſs, reſignation, and good affections of every kind,

improved? Then are you a true worſhipper. Theſe are ſome of the genuine workings of piety.

I inquire not, whether they be the reſult of longer or ſhorter prayers, of ſtudied forms or extempory addreſs, of more or fewer ſtated ſeaſons for ſuch offices. In theſe particulars different minds require a diverſity, or a different education occaſions it. But ſhe, I ſuppoſe, will be the greateſt proficient in the Spirit of Prayer, who is at the greateſt pains to be ſo; I do not mean in the way of ſcience or art, but in that of earneſtneſs and perſeverance.

Beſides the regular, invariable, and ſolemn performance of your morning and evening devotions, it would be well if now and then, eſpecially on the day of ſacred reſt, you took repeated opportunities of entering into your cloſet, ſhutting your door, and praying to your Father who ſees in ſecret: according as you found yourſelf in a happier diſpoſition for ſuch employment, or were prompted to it by ſome peculiar occurrences

occurences in your ſituation, or exigence in your ſoul. And if, at certain times of the year, pointed out by religious cuſtom, or fixed upon by perſonal choice, you were to conſecrate a whole day to holy retreat and devotional exerciſes, joined with prudent faſting; I am perſuaded, you would find it as highly beneficial in your own practice, as it comes ſtrongly recommended by the experience of the ſaints.

If you might be adviſed by me, you ſhould in prayer neither truſt wholly to your ſingle fund of thought and expreſſion, ſuppoſing it even rich and various, nor confine yourſelf entirely to forms, by whatever man or ſet of men compoſed; but uſe ſometimes one, ſometimes the other, and ſometimes a mixture of both, juſt as the attraction of your mind ſeems to lead at the moment, or as any of theſe methods may on trial be attended with moſt ſatisfaction and advantage. In effect, I am convinced that of thoſe who, in this kind of commerce, limit themſelves to their own unaſſiſted ſtock, the greater part will often, particularly

larly in circumſtances of bad health or ſpiritual dryneſs, be reduced to ſuch ſtraits as muſt produce a poverty of devotion which they could not ſuffer, did they proceed on a large foundation. On the other hand, I cannot conceive, that, even amongſt thoſe who are moſt devoted to forms, any ſincere worſhipper ſhould not by the ſwelling of ſentiment, and the current of devotion, be frequently carried away into a freer and fuller effuſion of the heart.

As to the length of thoſe duties, I would only ſay, that you muſt be governed by your condition both outward and inward; that you are to avoid every thing careleſs, or formal, whether with or without preconceived words; that little intermiſſions are often extremely uſeful to relive the mind, and fit it for a new exertion of its powers; but that, on the other ſide, by praying in continuity, the ſoul is often warmed into life and energy, till that exerciſe which was begun with langour is concluded with affection.

When

When I ſpeak of affection, let me warn you not to miſtake the effervescence of fancy for the ſpirit of devotion. They are two things widely different. "By their "fruits ye ſhall know them." The fluency, tears, and rapture produced by the firſt, are mechanical, ſuperficial, and ineffective; engendering only the confidence of Enthuſiaſm, or waſting themſelves in the ſcrupuloſity of Superſtition. The laſt, though frequently accompanied with fluency, tears, and rapture, at leaſt in minds of much ſenſibility, is yet often not ſo: but then, it leaves the heart better, however, this may not be diſcerned immediately. She who ſometimes perhaps, like the ſelf-abaſed publican, is able only to ſigh out "God be merciful to me a ſinner," may in that All-ſeeing eye be as acceptable as the moſt eloquent petitioner that ever addreſſed the throne of heaven. We read of "the ſpirit's helping our infirmities" in this very exerciſe, "and making inter-"ceſſion for us with groanings that cannot "be uttered."

Mental

Mental prayer and ſilent ejaculation, I will not now conſider. They are the attainments of perſons far advanced in devotion. By purſuing the track I point out, you may hope to reach them in one degree or another; and ſome experience in them will lead you to more. Thoſe who can abſtract and conſecrate their minds, ſo as readily to place themſelves in the preſence of God, wherever they are, and to converſe with him even in a croud, whether by continued contemplation, or by ſudden dartings of pious affection towards him on the point of a vigorous thought, certainly poſſeſs a very noble ſecret, fruitful alike of edification and enjoyment; ſuch too as renders them much leſs dependent on the accidents of their ſituation, ſince, let their buſineſs or other engagements be what they will, they may be ſtill with God, calm, ſelf-poſſeſſed, and happily diſpoſed to "pray al-"ways," a ſtate of ſpiritual life, which there is reaſon to fear is known by few.

There is a kind of middle practice, which is probably leſs uncommon, as it is certainly

tainly more eaſy; that of praying with a repreſſed voice, or one not in the leaſt audible to a ſecond perſon, while yet the words are diſtinctly and deliberately ſpoken by the worſhipper, who by ſuch means preſerves his ideas from diſſipation, and impreſſes them more deeply on his own heart. I ſaid deliberately; becauſe, in this as well as in every other method of prayer, hurry and precipitation are utterly incompatible with the ſpirit of devotion.

Of even the ſtrongeſt and moſt retired minds, it may, I believe, be affirmed, that they never think at all, on whatever occaſion, without the ſecret or internal uſe of language, although they ſeldom attend to it. Be that as it may, I am ſatisfied, that vocal prayer, whether more or leſs articulate, will be found, in general, by far the moſt proportioned to the human, and particularly to the female faculties. Of the manner laſt mentioned we have a remarkable example in the mother of Samuel. It is a beautiful paſſage, ſtrongly expreſſive of the workings of a devout but ſorrowful ſpirit,

ſpirit, and at the ſame time of the power of devotion to turn ſorrow and ſighing into joy and praiſe.

One thing we may boldly pronounce, as a maxim which will never fail; that ſhe has worſhipped to purpoſe, in whatever mode ſhe has worſhipped, who comes away improved or eſtabliſhed in worthy diſpoſitions, whether theſe are attended with much emotion or with none, with much delight or with little at the time. This remark I judged peculiarly neceſſary here, conſidering how eaſily you, my young friends, may be miſled on this ſubject by that ardour of paſſion, and that vivacity of fancy, which are ſo natural to you; and which, whereever devotion is concerned, are ſo prone to aſſume its name, when at the very beſt they can only aid its flights.

On the ſame principle, I would caution you not to loſe yourſelves in generalities; which, however they may chance to engage the underſtanding, or entertain the imagination, ſeldom or never touch the conſcience,

ſcience, or intereſt the heart. In converſing with a virtuous and intimate friend, you would chooſe certainly to dwell on thoſe matters that affected you moſt nearly, or to throw out thoſe reflexions that moſt readily occurred. In this higher correſpondence you ſhould do the ſame; only with more ſolemnity, and greater abſtraction from ſecular objects.

Nothing can be more erroneous than the common opinion, that the ſeveral parts of prayer, as they are uſually termed, ought to enter into every longer act of devotion. What is this, but to reduce into a mere trial of ſkill, or to reſtrain within the tramels of a ſyſtem, and thereby degrade to a laborious and jejune piece of formality, that which ought to be free and unaffected, natural and noble? — "I am going into "the company of a boſom friend. Let "me ſettle before hand the whole plan of "our converſation; that I may be ſure to "introduce ſuch and ſuch topics, in order "to diſcuſs them ſeverally one after ano-"ther, at full length, and with due con-

"nexion."——He who ſhould talk in this manner would betray, methinks, very little acquaintance with the ſpirit of friendſhip. In that, my ſiſters and in true devotion, there is nothing, believe me, artificial, nicely managed, or elaborately ſtudied. Eſteem, ſentiment, confidence, a ſympathy of ſoul, and the overflowings of the heart are all in all. I think not of the public offices of religion, where, in thoſe who lead them, more regularity and accuracy are no doubt required.

On the whole, when you addreſs the ſeat of mercy, you ought to ſpeak what you feel moſt ſtrongly at that particular ſeaſon; to follow without ſcruple the inward attraction before mentioned; to inſiſt on thoſe things of a ſpiritual nature that are then attended with the greateſt reliſh: to continue your attention to them calmly, but fixedly while that reliſh remains; then to paſs on, if time and other circumſtances permit, to ſomething elſe, ſtill without any agitation or violent effort, nor deeming it neceſſary to follow out this new track, ſhould another preſent

ſent itſelf that ſeems more promiſing, or that lies more parallel to the courſe of your thoughts on the occaſion; chiefly concerned to keep alive a ſenſe of that great preſence in which you are, of thoſe wants and weakneſſes under which you labour, of what you owe to others as well as to yourſelves, and of that divinely efficacious interceſſion through which alone you wiſh and hope to be heard and accepted.

A compoſed, affectionate, and ſteady attention to theſe and ſuch like rules (for I cannot now enter into the full detail) will, if I am not greatly miſtaken, prove one effectual means of cultivating the life and power of religion within you. I need not add, what you have been told times without number, and what your own hearts cannot on the leaſt reflexion fail to repeat: that no prayers can be effectual for this or any one good purpoſe, which are not accompanied with a correſpondent watchfulneſs, and faithful diſcharge of every other duty.

But, it may be neceſſary to ſubjoin, that the practice of devotion now recommended, cannot take place without much preparation from time to time; of which one well known part is the Reading of the Scriptures. On this a very few obſervations ſhall ſuffice.

For acquiring what is generally ſtyled Religious Knowledge, reading the Scriptures throughout, and often large portions at a time, may be perfectly proper. For improving in that which thoſe Scriptures ſpeak of chiefly under this denomination, I mean a practical and vital ſenſe of things divine and everlaſting, a different method, as I conceive, ſhould be followed.

Short and ſelect paſſages from both Teſtaments, but eſpecially the New, and more particularly from the hiſtory and ſermons of our Saviour, ſhould be peruſed and pondered at leiſure, firſt without any commentary at all, and ſo indeed for the moſt part, except where there is a manifeſt difficulty; in doing which, you ſhould with awful reverence

verence and child-like ſimplicity lay your minds open to the native impreſſions of the truth, and to the ſecret teachings of its Author. When, in this way, you meet with one or more verſes, that ſtrike you with peculiar conviction or delight; cloſe the book, revolve them again and again, look up to heaven, and implore the Father of Spirits to write their meaning on your hearts, as "with the point of a diamond." Read nothing more at that time, nothing at leaſt that has not a near relation to the ideas and affections they excite. Give theſe an eaſy unſtudied vent in prayer. The pleaſure and the benefit will be unſpeakable. Only ſuffer not the tincture thereby left upon you, to be loſt in the ſucceeding ſcenes. Next morning review the ſame paſſage; endeavour to recall the ſame ſentiments, and with your pencil mark it for your future benefit.

A young lady formerly of my acquaintance, who is now reading the character and will of her Creator in the light of the beatific viſion, uſed daily to follow this practice. Her Bible was infinitely prized by

her; whatever was moſt excellent in it, ſhe had thought and weighed all over. Its ſacred contents were engraven on her ſoul; or rather, her ſoul was delivered into the mold of it. She lived in innocence, and died in triumph.

It is neceſſary, my beloved diſciples, that I ſhould urge you to the ſtudy of a book which, while it tends to make you wiſe to ſalvation, is calculated alſo to convey the moſt affecting views, and awaken the ſubliméſt ſenſibilities, on a thouſand topics? A book it certainly is, full of entertainment as well as inſtruction, compoſed by a great diverſity of authors, and all of them divinely taught. I think, I ſee them, one after another, preſenting for your improvement their reſpective writings, with an aſpect of dignity and ſweetneſs combined; the dignity of truth, and the ſweetneſs of benevolence, both derived from Him, who inſpired them to be the teachers of mankind, and Who, in order to gain them the more belief and veneration, inveſted many of them with a command over Nature, and the

the knowledge of futurity, which none but the God of Nature, and the Spirit of Omniſcience could impart. I think, I hear them ſeverally addreſſing you, in the name of God, with an authority that can only be equalled by their mildneſs, on ſubjects the grandeſt and moſt important, in a happy variety of ſtyles, amidſt an uniformity of ſentiment, and an agreement in facts, which, the multiplicity of them conſidered, muſt appear truly admirable! What ſhall I ſay more?——I will not deſire you to read this book called the Bible, if you can ſhow me another containing ſo much to inform, impreſs and delight reflecting minds, laid together in a manner ſo extenſively adopted to their various turns of underſtanding, taſte and temper; which people of different and diſtant countries, through a long ſucceſſion of ages, have held in ſo much reverence, and read with ſo much advantage; where it is ſo difficult to determine, which are moſt diſtinguiſhed, eaſe and ſimplicity, or ſublimity and force; but where all are ſo beautifully united; where there is ſo little to diſcourage the weakeſt

ſpirit

ſpirit if docile, and ſo much to gratify the ſtrongeſt if candid; where the fancy and the heart, the intellect and the conſcience, are applied to by turns with ſuch familiarity, and yet ſuch majeſty: In fine, where the frailties, diſorders, and diſtreſſes of human nature, are all ſo feelingly laid open, and the remedies which heaven has provided ſo tenderly applied. But, to proceed,

Of books of Divinity, I do not wiſh you to read very many. Thoſe in the way of Religious Controverſy, as it is called, but which are frequently written in a moſt irreligious ſpirit, that is, without any candour or fairneſs, I do not wiſh you to read at all. Mere argumentative theology, I have never known to improve the temper, or regulate the conduct; but often to hurt both. Happily for you, indeed, the female taſte very ſeldom lies in that way; never, I think, where there is female ſweetneſs. By a good providence you have been taught "the truth as it is in "Jeſus." Be it your ambition to practiſe, not to diſpute about it. Enjoy your faith

in

in modeſt ſilence and think well of thoſe who differ from you in opinions, if they agree in morals; but, learn to deſpiſe the futility, while you diſcourage the impudence, of ſuch as would pretend to talk you out of your religion. Be aſſured they are often empty and always worthleſs. If they attempt it in the ſtyle of banter, they offer you an affront. If they affect to ſeem in earneſt, to be ſorry for your prejudices, and ſolicitous to remove them by converſation, and by books which they are ready to lend you: a hundred to one but they are actuated by the worſt deſigns. Fly them, my fair pupils, fly them with horror, as tempters and ravagers at the ſame inſtant.

By making conſcience of ſincerly obeying the precepts of the Goſpel, while you meekly embrace its doctrines, as they appear to you ſet forth in the Scriptures, you will have the witneſs of its divinity within yourſelves. From thence you will be diſpoſed to chooſe and adhere to thoſe writers, of whatever communion, that are calculated

lated to make you moſt in love with your Saviour and your duty. The formal and frigid you will naturally diſlike; the uncharitable and illiberal you will nobly deteſt; the trifling and ſuperficial you will very eaſily contemn. Thoſe books, how well ſoever recommended, that even in your graveſt hours do not attract and perſuade you, I) now ſuppoſe you pious), you will readily perceive are not the books for you. Such as do both in a greater or leſſer degree, it is apparent, are adapted to your caſt of mind. Thoſe, in ſhort, will be your favourite authors, whether in verſe or proſe, whom you find moſt frequently new and intereſting; who preſent the moſt pathetic pictures of this world and the next; who tell you moſt convincingly what you are, and what you ought to be; who ſeem in a word, to addreſs themſelves with the greateſt power to the ſpirit of ingenuity, humility, contrition, ſelf-deniel, ſolid virtue, and affectionate devotion.

I take it for granted you attend on the public Inſtitutions of religion. The ſuperior

rior regularity of your ſex in this reſpect, the men, to ſay the truth, ſhow very little inclination to diſpute. May the women take care to convince them, that it is ſomething more than mere regularity! In the mean time, I am ſure, that they who perform their firſt duties, are much more likely to perform there ſecond alſo, than they who do not.

Let your attendance be more than what the world calls decent: let it be punctual. She that becomes deficient in ſuch punctuality, will ſoon become indefferent about the whole. Having omitted her duty unneceſſarily once, a ſecond, and a third time, ſhe will omit it the fourth with leſs compunction, and ere long will be ready to neglect it without any. It is wonderful, how ſoon a ſenſe of futurity dies from the ſoul. Have you ever known it to live, where the Sabbath grew into contempt? What multitudes have been forced to date their ruin from thence.

But, not to ſpeak of the openly profane, do

do thoſe ſanctify the Sabbath to whom it is not a delight, who viſit the houſe of God without preparation, and worſhip there without devotion? What ſhall we ſay of many a young woman who paſſes for good and pious, although ſhe cannot for an hour together behave with ſedateneſs, or compoſure, in the immediate preſence of the Moſt High? That mind muſt be volatile, indeed, which the ſolemnities of a Chriſtian aſſembly cannot fix for a little.—— Do we wiſh you then to diſfigure your faces like the Phariſees, to hang your heads like a bulruſh, or to practiſe religious grimace of any kind? No. Is even the graveſt look, or moſt recollected manner, a certain ſign of piety? It is not: and yet, will you ſay, that ſuch a look and manner are of no importance on ſuch an occaſion; that they are not naturally ſuited to it; or that the ſpirit of piety may very probably dwell in her heart whoſe countenance and carriage even on that occaſion do not bear the marks of it, who even then cannot reſtrain the rolling eye,

forget

forget the conſcious air, or leave the flutter-ing demeanour?

Believe me, Ladies, a different behaviour would appear much more becoming. Men of ſenſe and ſobriety would entertain a much better opinion of your principles, nor would it be any diſadvantage to your perſons. Never, perhaps, does a fine woman ſtrike more deeply, than when compoſed into pious recollection, and poſſeſſed with the nobleſt conſiderations, ſhe aſſumes, without knowing its ſuperior dignity and new graces; ſo that the beauties of holineſs ſeem to radiate about her, and the by-ſtanders are almoſt induced to fancy her already worſhiping amongſt her kindred angels.

But, to return to the point immediately before us; I ſay, that the habit of ſeriouſneſs and devotion in church, will produce very deſirable effects on your temper and conduct out of it. By beginning the week well, you will retain through the remainder a certain impreſſion of goodneſs,

that will follow you every where; at the ſame time that, by ſuch avowed teſtimonies of reſpect for your Maker and Saviour, you will enſure the continuance of the divine benediction and aſſiſtance.

The great advantages ariſing from a diligent attention to the Preaching of the word, and alſo from an early, frequent and devout participation of the Lord's ſupper, I will not now enter upon. They are abundantly obvious, and have been frequently enforced. But, I cannot quit the ſubject of the Sabbath without obſerving, that to thoſe, who join in the public ſervices of that day, its utility is often totally defeated by their reſigning the evening to company and recreation; the general tendency of theſe being to efface any ſerious impreſſions made in the preceding part of it. For ſuch a practice, you my fair charge, who have commonly ſo much leiſure upon your hands, cannot plead the leaſt excuſe.

Very hard it is, if thoſe who give ſo many other evenings to amuſement, cannot find

find in their hearts to give this or a part of it to God. But alas! it is that very paſſion for amuſement, which prevents or dulls the taſte for devotion. To her, indeed, who will not be perſuaded to reſcue ſo ſmall a portion of her time from the gaieties of the world for the purpoſes of her ſalvation, we cannot hope to ſay any thing that will be of uſe. She who cannot enjoy the company of her Creator for an hour or two, remote from all other company, was never initiated into the myſteries of divine friendſhip: ſhe is yet in her ſins, "alie-"nated from the life of God, dead while "ſhe lives;" in a ſpiritual ſenſe dead, alive only to animal nature and the tumultuous dreams of a diſtempered mind; in ſhort, a poor giddy worthleſs creature, incapable of whatever is wiſe or happy.

"Oh! loſt to virtue, loſt to ſober thought,
"Loſt to the noble ſallies of the ſoul,
"Who think it ſolitude to be alone,
"Communion ſweet! communion large and
"high!

" Our reaſon, guardian angel, and our God!
" Then neareſt theſe, when others moſt
" remote;
" And all ere long ſhall be remote but theſe.
" How dreadful then to meet them all alone.
" A ſtranger unacknowledg'd, unapprov'd!

I tremble at the thought. Nor will it avail you, in this caſe, to plead even the utmoſt exactneſs and conſtancy in your attendance on the ſanctuary. That alone will prove nothing. Entertainment may ſtill be the idol which you worſhip, and worſhip even in the temple of Jehovah. If you ſay it is not, let us bring you to the teſt. When you return home from the houſe of God, can you retire with pleaſure to your cloſets, impoſe ſilence on your fancies, command your paſſions to be ſtill, exclude every thought of dreſs and diverſion, company and admiration; review what you have been doing, recall what you have heard, make application, if it admits of any (there are few diſcourſes that admit not ſome); and then, caſting yourſelves

yourſelves down at the footſtool of the throne of God, pour out your hearts before him, confeſs with ſimplicity and ſorrow for your ſins and corruptions, implore the grace of repentance and remiſſion for what is paſt, of diſcernment to know your duty for the future, and of fortitude to do it, forming at the ſame time unfeigned reſolutions for that purpoſe; adjoining to the whole the adoration of the divine attributes, as they ſucceſſively or jointly riſe to your view; and, finally, throwing yourſelves on the divine mercy through Chriſt Jeſus? ——Can you do this? Is it your favourite and habitual employment, in the evening of that day which God has made for himſelf? To her who can honeſtly anſwer in the affirmative, I will acknowledge freely, that, next to the daily tenor of a conduct uniformly Chriſtian, ſhe gives one of the beſt proofs of ſincerity in her religious profeſſion; nor is there any thing excellent in that, which I ſhould not expect from a practice ſo wiſe and pious. But, what is to be expected of thoſe who know nothing of this? Or what can be ſaid of their intentions

tions in going to church, who the moment they leave it, leave every reflection which it ought to have imprinted, and reſolve to think of religion no more that day, than if they had not heard or mentioned a ſyllable relating to it? St James will inform you whom they are like. They are "like un-" to a man beholding his natural face in a "glaſs; for he beholdeth himſelf and "goeth his way, and ſtraightway forgetteth "what manner of man he was."——Do men then ſo readily loſe the image of themſelves? No; but the Apoſtle muſt be underſtood to ſpeak of ſome thoughtleſs creature, who, on looking accidentally into a glaſs, and obſerving certain ſpots, or ſtains in his face, which he ought inſtantly to wipe off, turns away in haſte without availing himſelf of the diſcovery; and, in the purſuit of other objects, entirely neglects a circumſtance that demanded his immediate attention. I leave you to apply the remark, and only add in general, that the cloſet muſt enforce what the pulpit has ſuggeſted; that as, like Lydia, you ſhould attend diligently to the things which are

ſpoken

ſpoken in the name of God; ſo, like Mary, you ſhould keep and ponder them in your hearts; and that as Jeſus himſelf, diſmiſſing the multitudes together with his diſciples, "went up into a mountain apart to pray," ſo you, diſengaging yourſelves from the interruption of a crowd, and the company even of your moſt intimate connexions, ſhould ſtep aſide, more particularly at the ſeaſon in queſtion, to converſe with his Father and your Father, with his God and your God.

Think not from any thing I have ſaid, that I want to ſubject you to the rules of Jewiſh rigour, under the mild diſpenſation of the Goſpel. What I propoſe will render the Chriſtian-ſabbath no leſs pleaſant than improving. Nor do I mean to preclude on that day the cheerful reciprocations of holy friendſhip: which they that have a taſte for them will very eaſily diſtinguiſh from the unſeaſonable paſtimes and promiſcuous viſitings, in which many fine ladies of the preſent age paſs their Sunday evenings.

Thus

Thus I am brought to ſay ſomething of Religious Converſation. An attempt to diſcuſs ſo important a topic would carry me too far. To manage religious converſation with propriety and advantage, is for the moſt part an affair of great delicacy. In the more retired intercourſe of congenial minds, well taught and well furniſhed, it may not be difficult. But ſuch, I fear, are not often found; and even where ſuch have the happineſs to meet, grave diſcourſe will require to be frequently varied, relieved and ſuſpended, in order to keep up its reliſh.

Much ſentiment is apt to overwhelm. The ſoul quickly ſeeks relaxation. The bow cannot be long bent without having its elaſticity impaired. In general company, ſubjects of devotion and morality would, as the world goes, be utterly improper. Good Lord! to what is this generation ſunk, that even amongſt characters otherwiſe decent, a man can ſeldom or never introduce a ſolemn reflection, without incurring the imputation of cant or impertinence?

nence? When ſhall it be the mode to converſe like immortal beings? Where is the faſhionable circle now, in which a ſerious obſervation can be prudently hazarded, if not ſtolen upon them with art and inſinuation? Neither is this a part for you to take upon yourſelves.

Female modeſty is often ſilent; female decorum is never bold. Both forbid a young woman to lead the converſation; and true religion dreads every thing that might look oſtentatious. The moſt prudent courſe you can purſue is to aſſociate, as much as poſſible, with thoſe that from real principle love the ſhade. With them you may ſafely unboſom yourſelves on the beſt ſubjects, without the danger of ridicule, or the ſuſpicion of affectation. When the children of wiſdom aſſemble, out of the ſight and din of folly; what improvement and felicity crown the ſcene! How delightfully do they then mingle ſouls! Nor does their parent diſdain to ſport with her offſpring. I mean, that genuine piety knows how

how to blend recreation and ſmiles with ſentiment and gravity.

Having mentioned Sentiment ſo often, I will now once for all offer you a caution, on which I lay a particular ſtreſs. It is this; not to miſtake the capacity of thinking juſtly, or of talking well, for the ſame thing with a diſpoſition to act wiſely. The truth is, that people are not wiſe in conſequence either of profound knowledge or vaſt learning, or beautiful notions, or the moſt cultivated taſte, or the greateſt ability in diſplaying theſe; but by virtue of a few plain notions ſettled into principles of conduct; even as people are not healthy by feaſting on rich dainties, or indulging to a nice palate, but by living on ſimple fare, where temperance does not wiſh for much variety, and where hunger does not want it.

Nevertheleſs, there is not, perhaps, any thing that flatters the human mind more, than depth or fluency of remark, than compaſs or felicity of converſation. In effect, they

they are talents not often poſſeſſed, and ſuch as confer a ſuperiority felt by all, however it may be acknowledged by few. When it is acknowledged, ſuch praiſe tranſports; and thoſe who receive it ſet themſelves down for every thing that is great and accompliſhed. Alas! they forget, that theſe are ſtill at beſt but in the ſecond claſs of excellence; that in a moral view they are of no value: and that fine diſcourſe and fine characters are things totally diſtinct.

In reality, your beſt talkers are very ſeldom your beſt livers. From their encomiums on virtue, and their declamations againſt vice, they receive often ſuch high pleaſure as with them paſſes for love of the one, and abhorrence of the other; when it is only perhaps a vain complacence in their own powers, joined to that natural ſenſe of right and wrong, which is common to them with all others. In this they reſt, well ſatisfied to leave to the others the leſs ſhowy, and more troubleſome part, which belongs to practice. To that alſo ſpeculation

lation is often an enemy, in the ſame manner as familiarity is to reſpect.

Religion, beloved, is a majeſtic form always to be treated with reverence; with affection too, I confeſs, as being likewiſe an amiable form. But this affection reſembles that which a wiſe ſubject would ſhow for his prince, into whoſe friendſhip he found himſelf graciouſly admitted. Such a man would never forget his own ſubordination ſo far as to drop the reverence due to royalty. If his prince condeſcended to treat him with the openneſs of confidence, and the careſs of joy; yet ſtill would he bear in mind, that he was only a ſubject, and every freedom on his ſide would be tempered with reſpectful modeſty.

Perhaps, there is nothing ſo uncommon as to ſpeak of divine objects with the proper veneration. How have I been ſhocked to hear the ſanctimonious, yet audacious, prate of ſome pretenders to religion! Thoſe that have the ſtrongeſt perceptions of it, will be moſt ſtruck by its ſublimity, and moſt

moſt conſcious how far they fall ſhort of ſo high a ſtandard. By conſequence they will profeſs it with the greateſt modeſty, and mention it with the utmoſt caution. They that are moſt intimately acquainted with God and themſelves, will be moſt deeply impreſſed with his grandeur and their own littleneſs, will moſt clearly perceive the difference between knowing His will and performing it, will feel moſt ſenſibly how much eaſier it is to deſcant on all his perfections, than to copy one of them.

To conclude, Let me beſeech you, beyond all things, to converſe much with your Maker and yourſelves; to ſtudy His character and your own; to trace His attributes where-ever diſplayed; to learn His counſels however revealed; to examine your conſciences chiefly by the written word; to canvaſs your paſt actions, preſent purſuits, and prevailing views; to approve or condemn, as under His eye; to aſcertain your intereſt in the friendſhip of your Divine Sovereign, and cheriſh an unalterable faith in his Spirit and Providence,

as ever ready to aſſiſt your honeſt though feeble efforts; together with a joyful aſſurance, that, if you are not wilfully wanting to yourſelves, you ſhall at laſt attain immortal excellence and glory, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

SER-

SERMON XII.

On Female Meekneſs.

1 PET. iii. 3, 4.

Whoſe adorning, let it not be that outward adorning *of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but* let it be *the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible,* even the ornament *of a Meek and Quiet Spirit, which is in the ſight of God of great price.*

THE Apoſtle of the Circumciſion, like him of the Gentiles, ſeems to have been no ſtranger to female nature, or to what becomes it. Both were ſufficiently aware, that ornament was a favourite object with women; and both were too well acquainted with the arts of perſuaſion, to think of combating the general idea. It was their buſineſs to make the beſt uſe of ſuch a handle. Accordingly, their converts of that ſex might continue to ſtudy embelliſhment as much as ever; only thoſe

inſpired teachers wiſhed them to direct it right, by making that their chief care which was of the greateſt value and the longeſt duration, namely, "the hidden "man of the heart." The doctrine of St Paul on this point, we have examined very fully. That of St Peter, now read, we propoſe for the ground-work of our concluding diſcourſe, with a view to complete the plan which we have proſecuted thus far. We have reſerved it for this place, as believing, that Meekneſs cultivated on Chriſtian principles, is the proper conſummation, and higheſt finiſhing of female excellence. The ſubject being ſo important, may I not hope to be ſtill honoured with your attention?

I begin with obſerving, that the virtue in queſtion has its Foundation in the Softer Compoſition of the ſex. That there is a ſex in minds was hinted before. This original diſtinction has never, I think, been better underſtood than by our great epic poet. As in his admired work of Paradiſe Loſt, he has with equal judgment and delicacy

cacy marked, throughout, the ſeparate characters of the Firſt Pair; ſo he has, in two lines, happily expreſſed the principal objects of their reſpective deſtinations:

" For contemplation He, and valour
" form'd;
" For ſoftneſs She, and ſweet attractive
" grace."

The virtue of meekneſs, it is true, our religion requires of all without exception. Moſes is celebrated for it in an eminent degree; and our Saviour characterizes himſelf by the epithets Meek and Lowly. The diſpoſition, in general, may be conſidered as Charity's firſt-born, appearing in all the mildeſt attitudes of forbearance, gentleneſs and peace. But ſtill in men, it may be often found connected with the greateſt boldneſs, and moſt undaunted magnanimity. Much for the honour of true Courage, it has been obſerved, that the braveſt minds are commonly the moſt humane, generous and forgiving. Theſe ſeveral qualities are beautifully blended in many parts of the hi-

ſtory of that man of God juſt now mentioned. Nor can you have forgotten the calm heroiſm of our divine Deliverer, together with that dignity of goodneſs which dwelt about him, in circumſtances of the deepeſt humiliation and ſorrow.

As for you, my fair pupils, we wiſh you no doubt to poſſeſs ſuch fortitude as implies reſolution, where-ever your virtue, duty or reputation is concerned. But, along with that, we expect to find, on other ſubjects, a timidity peculiar to your ſex; and alſo a degree of complacence, yieldingneſs and ſweetneſs, beyond what we look for in men. Neither do we, ſo far as I know, ever rank amongſt feminine qualities, Valour, ſtrictly ſo called. A woman heading an army, ruſhing into the thickeſt of the foe, ſpreading ſlaughter and death around her, or returning from the field of battle covered with duſt and blood, would ſurely, to a civilized nature, ſuggeſt ſhocking ideas.

Your beſt emblem, beloved, is the ſmiling form of Peace, robed in white, and bearing

bearing a branch of olive. Like the Apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians, your higheſt glory is to conquer by benignity, and triumph by patience. Roughneſs, and even ferociouſneſs, in a man, we often overlook, and are ſometimes diverted with. In a woman, we are always hurt by them. A loud voice, a bold geſture, a daring countenance, in ſhort, every mark of bravery ſhall pleaſe in the former, when his courage is particularly called forth: but, in a female, we wiſh nothing to reign but love and tenderneſs: and where they do reign, they will produce very different effects.

No, my friends, you were not made for ſcenes of danger and oppoſition. I muſt repeat it, that fearfulneſs to a certain degree becomes you; not that cowardice, which many of you ſhow, and ſome of you affect on every trifling occaſion, and frequently without any occaſion at all. Such behaviour in you is childiſh, and to us unintereſting; if not an object of contempt. But a worthy woman, ſhrinking from manifeſt hazard, or threatened violence, we

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are always forward and proud to protect; while, on the other hand, an intrepid female ſeems to renounce our aid, and in ſome reſpect to invade our province, we turn away, and leave her to herſelf.

Let it be likewiſe obſerved, that, in your ſex, manly exerciſes are never graceful; that in them, a tone and figure, as well as an air and deportment of the maſculine kind, are always forbidding: and that men of ſenſibility deſire in every woman, ſoft features, and a flowing voice, a form not robuſt, and a demeanor delicate and gentle. Theſe, indeed, are conſidered as alike requiſite and natural; I mean where there is any taſte for elegance. I am even inclined to believe that, ſuppoſing other circumſtances equal, the coarſeſt clown would be better pleaſed with them than with their oppoſites.

Yet farther, the aptitude obſervable in all the better kind of women, to commiſerate and comfort, to melt into tears at the ſight or hearing of diſtreſs, to take the care of

of children, to play and prattle with thoſe pretty innocents, to mingle in all the mild ſympathies and tender charities of life: the wonderful dexterity with which they diſarm fierceneſs, and appeaſe wrath; the powerful eloquence they diſplay in aſſuaging the cares, and calming the ſorrows, of thoſe men with whom they are connected; their ſtrong propenſity to an union of hearts, and their unutterable fondneſs where it takes place;——theſe lovely peculiarities in their temperament, theſe finer tunings of their minds, ſeem additional proofs, that ſoftneſs is your proper attribute. Womaniſh ſoftneſs, as it is ſtyled, has never been imputed to any man by way of reproach, without a tacit acknowledgement of this truth in your favour. In the male compoſition, it is certainly a blemiſh where-ever found; in the female, a beauty.

From theſe remarks, I think it appears, that the baſis of the virtue we now recommend is laid in the original make, or ſpecific character of the ſex. The Superſtructure which Chriſtianity raiſes upon it, or, in

in other words, the improvements it receives from religious principle, ſhall be our next conſideration.

The Goſpel is, in truth, the religion of human nature; building charity and all virtue on whatever is kind, ingenuous, or praiſe-worthy in that; correcting its diſorders, mitigating its diſtreſſes, ſupporting its weakneſſes, and from each reducing good, by turning them into matter of humility and circumſpection, of faith and reſignation, of docility and meekneſs. Theſe are all connected together; but the firſt and laſt are nearly allied. They are twin-ſiſters. Humility is ever diſpoſed to ſerve; and ſhe affords the other ſingular aſſiſtance.

They that have a juſt ſenſe of their own infirmities and failings, will be naturally of an unpretending, a forbearing, and a forgiving temper. The reverſe of this is the genuine offspring of Pride. A proud character was never a meek one; whereas, there is no act of kindneſs, no inſtance of condeſcenſion, which the ſelf-diffident are not

not ready to perform. They enter thoroughly into the ſpirit of thoſe precepts that require Chriſtians to "be courteous, to "condeſcend to men of low eſtate, and in "honour to prefer one another."

Picture in your own minds a young lady, lively, agreeable, careſſed; as yet unacquainted with her Maker, with herſelf, and with the claims which ſociety has on every reaſonable being that is ſent into life. The magic power of Fancy, ſet to work by vanity, ambition and hope, creates a kind of world within, to which ſhe fondly refers that without, as always ſubordinate, and chiefly ſubſervient. In this little empire "ſhe ſits as a queen, and "ſaith in her heart, I ſhall ſee no ſorrow," and dreams of conqueſt and triumph, of ſplendid houſes and ſhining equipages, of paſſionate lovers and diſappointed rivals, with nameleſs enchanting viſions more which may never be realized, but which ſhe regards as the moſt certain realities; ſo certain, that he who ſhould attempt to undeceive her would run the riſk of being hated

hated as her greateſt enemy. This world of phantoms, it is true, is always fluctuating: the gay and the gloomy ſucceed by turns. But, in each our conceited fair one is ſtill the principal figure; and the value of every thing is meaſured according as it contributes to her importance and elevation. Hence innumerable illuſions, and ungoverned paſſions; the ſwelling of ſelf-ſufficiency, and the ſtatelineſs of diſdain; violent reſentment, or ſullen diſcontent, if not treated with the reſpect ſhe ſuppoſes to be her due; in fine, a total inattention to the expectations of others, and abſolute inſenſibility to whatever is beautiful in an unaſſuming, or noble in a diſintereſted behaviour. Now, what is it that can diſpel this viſionary ſcene, and diſabuſe the much deluded ſorcereſs? Nothing ſo effectual as Chriſtianity.

If it ſhould pleaſe the Almighty to impreſs upon her heart its ſacred doctrines, they will ſhow her, in the moſt affecting lights, her own littleneſs, the degeneracy and miſery of corrupted nature, the emptineſs

neſs of temporal and the reality of eternal things, the duty ſhe owes to her Maker, her Redeemer, and her fellow-creatures; with the neceſſity of ſecuring the divine favour, by a life of faith, contrition, and charity. By ſuch views, the fantaſtic ſtructures of Pride will be preſently brought down; and on their ruins the plain and modeſt, but pleaſing and graceful, fabric of Meekneſs, will be eaſily raiſed. To ſpeak without a metaphor, She will be delivered from the chief cauſes of ill-humour; ſuch, for inſtance, as the obſtinacy of ſelf-will, the exorbitance of ſelf-love, a paſſion for thoſe gratifications that at once diſſappoint and enervate, and finally, the expectation of too much homage, and too many compliances. The ſalvation of her ſoul, and the Spirit of her Saviour will become her principal objects: every virtue connected with theſe, will be her habitual ſtudy; and among the reſt "peace, "long ſuffering, gentleneſs, goodneſs, "meekneſs." With ſuch a temper ſhe will not be apt to think herſelf affronted; that revengeful diſpoſition, of which your ſex

have been accuſed even to a proverb, will be her abhorrence; ſhe will not dare, for a moment, to with-hold from others, that forgiveneſs which ſhe is conſcious of wanting from the great God to herſelf; and as to her behaviour to thoſe about her in general, it will breathe that winning mildneſs, which ſeems to me the moſt diſtinguiſhing lineament in the image of Jeſus.

He, my ſiſters, was the perfect model of kindneſs and courteſy. The friend of Man was his characteriſtic. He converſed with thoſe whom the world deſpiſed; He ſtood ſtill to hear the cries, and relieve the miſeries of the wretched; He even ſtooped (aſtoniſhing goodneſs!) to waſh the feet of his own diſciples; "the Son of man came "not to be miniſtered unto, but to mini-"ſter." The greatneſs of humility, and the beauty of compaſſion, he exemplified on all occaſions. He ſhowed by his own practice, that there is nothing more becoming than the tear of generous ſorrow, nothing ſo ſoothing as the language of a benevolent heart. Jeſus weeping over the grave

grave of Lazarus, conſoling his mournful ſiſters, and inſtructing the ſolemn circle in the ideas of immortality, with the means of attaining it, is ſurely an object by infinite degrees more intereſting and glorious, than all the conquerors of the earth crowned with laurels, and riding on the car of triumph with numberleſs captives in their train.

His inſtitution is of a piece with his character. It includes the grand principles of univerſal humanity. Every wall of partition between the nations it throws down; aboliſhing the narrow diſtinction of Jews and Gentiles, and exploding the illiberal oppoſition of Greeks to Barbarians. The ſpirit of conqueſt for the ſake of power it diſcourages, while it proclaims, enforces, and inſpires "peace on earth and good "will towards men;" whom it teaches to conſider and love as brethren, forming one great family under one common parent, held together by charity as the bond of perfection, and of ſuch an account with the Supreme, that he gave his only begotten Son to ſave them.

Need I labour to prove how ſweetly ſuch diſcoveries as theſe coincide with the diſpoſitions of modeſty, ſympathy, generoſity, the deſire of pleaſing, the dread of violence, the horror at barbarity, the promptitude to cheriſh tender ſentiments, and form endearing connexions, which are all ſo natural to the worthieſt part of your ſex?

The virtues of a Roman Matron, in the better times of that republic, appear on ſome accounts to have been greatly reſpectable. They were ſuch as might be looked for, from her education amongſt a people where ideas of proweſs, patriotiſm, and glory ran high; where, in effect, theſe things were regarded as the height of human excellence and felicity. But, not to inſiſt on the national pride, and generous prepoſſeſſions, on which thoſe ideas were founded; it is manifeſt to me, that whatever force or grandeur the female mind might in other views derive from them, ſuch advantage was far overbalanced by the loſs or diminution of that gentleneſs

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and ſoftneſs, which ever were, and ever will be, the ſovereign charm of the female character. Nor do I wiſh the women of Great Britain, who profeſs a ſyſtem ſo much more juſt, amiable, and happy, to to adopt for the regulation of their temper any ſtandard different from that in my text.

Some of the moſt agreeable and important conſequences of a meek and quiet ſpirit in your ſex, let us now proceed to ſurvey. Where nature has beſtowed any kind of perſonal beauty, be it ever ſo inconſiderable; how early is it known, and at what pains are the generality of the too conſcious poſſeſſors to diſplay it, on all occaſions, to the utmoſt advantage? But Nature has endowed the greater part of the ſex with a conſtitutional Softneſs, which, under right direction, would render them unſpeakably more pleaſing than any poſſible attraction that is purely external. Yet, how few of you ſeem acquainted with its proper uſe, ſo as to turn it to any valuable account! What eſteem might you not procure, and what happineſs com-

municate, if, inſtead of employing this ſoftneſs, merely to foſter paſſion in yourſelves or others, you made it ſubſervient to all the amiable purpoſes of a mild and obliging behaviour! How prepoſterous to think of any allurement, rather than that which ſhould chiefly adorn you as Women.

The gift I ſpeak of is imparted, no doubt, in different degrees, and with various mixtures; nor will any culture prevent a diverſity from appearing in individuals, with regard to this, as well as other features of the female mind: neither indeed ought it. Such diverſity is not only beautiful in itſelf, but agreeably adapted to the various and different taſtes of men. But ſtill ſome portion of the quality under conſideration is abſolutely eſſential to feminine excellence. Like every other one, indeed, it requires the guard of Virtue and the guidance of Diſcretion. This is certain, that any good diſpoſition you can name, how laudable or how eminent ſoever, if you could ſuppoſe it to be found alone, would conſtitute a character extremely

tremely imperfect, and produce effects ſufficiently hurtful. Where an eaſineſs of temper is particularly prevalent, and the heart uncommonly ſuſceptible of warm emotions in the way of love and friendſhip; there, without doubt, a peculiar ſtrain of prudence and fortitude is required, to prevent a young perſon's being betrayed into great inconveniencies, and dangerous tenderneſſes. But while I conſider Meekneſs as the crowning grace of a woman, it will be naturally underſtood, that ſome ſhare of the virtues and accompliſhments before recommended is preſuppoſed.

A cultivated mind and delicate ſpirit, together with ſtrict principles of conduct, will teach you to make the neceſſary diſtinctions amongſt thoſe you converſe with, to join caution with freedom, and while with the graceful eaſe you give to others what their character claims, with a modeſt firmneſs to ſupport your own. There are few things, perhaps, more contemptible than an undiſtinguiſhing female, that can ſmile alike upon all, that ſeems prepared for every

every addreſs, that looks as if the freeſt would not be unwelcome, that ſcatters herſelf amongſt promiſcuous objects; who, if I may be indulged the expreſſion, proſtitutes to every vagrant eye, and every new comer, any mental charms ſhe may poſſeſs, inſtead of preſerving them for the intimacies of virtuous love, or of ſacred friendſhip. You will readily conceive, that the deportment I would enforce is ſomething widely different.

In effect, were religious and moral conſiderations ſet aſide, ſuch women would not be very pleaſing on the footing of female ſoftneſs alone. Coquettes have commonly but little ſenſibility. Their natural graces, if any they had, are loſt in levity and affectation. While they court the regards of all, they have none to beſtow upon any. Let what was ſaid long ago be here remembered, that a forward appearance, and light demeanour, immediately diſguſt a man of the leaſt delicacy; who, if he is weak enough to love the courtſhip, has commonly, however, ſo much perception as not

not to approve of her who offers it. But good nature under the government of good ſenſe and real worth, will engage our eſteem without flattering our folly, and reach that juſt ſtandard of the female character, which conſiſts in a fine compoſition of gentleneſs and dignity, of ſweet complacence and virtuous reſerve; the happy medium ſo hard to hit between Prudery and its oppoſite extreme.

As the former of theſe is moſt directly repugnant to that lovely quality which we are now conſidering, I will now proceed to offer a few remarkes upon it; willing to rectify the nations, were it but of one of your ſex, on a ſubject which in the preſent age may, by ſevere judges, be reckoned leaſt of all neceſſary, in diſcourſing to young women.

That a prudiſh behaviour is never ſincere, I will not take upon me to affirm. It may ariſe ſometimes from an original frigidity, or ſtrange ſenſibility of make. I ſpeak not of the diſlikes that women conceive

ceive to particular men, while from others they are by no means unſuſceptible of kind impreſſions. Neither do I ſpeak of thoſe females whoſe firſt addreſs is frequently forbidding, occaſioned by a peculiar reſervedneſs of manner rather than temper, not at all incompatible with good affections; ſince it evidently wears off in a little, and that exceſſive baſhfulneſs gives place on proper encouragement, to a carriage equally courteous and modeſt. But where a woman bears, amongſt candid ſpirits, the character of a prude, there I muſt confeſs myſelf tempted to doubt both her honeſty and her underſtanding.

This we are ſure of, that it is very common for people to affect moſt the appearance of thoſe virtues which they leaſt poſſeſs. What they want in reality they would fain ſupply in ſhow, afraid of ſuſpicion, where they are conſcious of guilt; whereas thoſe that are ſound at heart, are ſeldom apprehenſive of being ſuſpected. "A good man ſhall be ſatisfied from him-"ſelf," and generally leaves others to collect

collect his principles from his practice. An honeſt confidence in the rectitude of his own intentions begets a ſimplicity of manmers, that deſpiſes oſtentation in all caſes, and ſuperſedes profeſſion in moſt. I do not mean Religious Profeſſion, which a good man will never think unneceſſary, though he will always make it with modeſty. In ſhort, true virtue, whether male or female, is like the ſun, beſt ſeen in its own light.

Of a defect of ſenſe, prudery is an indiſputable proof. It never ſucceeds in its attempts to impoſe. A woman of this character is conſidered by our ſex as an hypocrite, by yours as a hypocrite and a ſpy at the ſame time. Both are incited to a keener inſpection into her conduct. On the leaſt failure in that, both are provoked to a ſharper reproach; and ſhould the ungracious diſſembler at laſt drop her diſguiſe altogether, the triumph againſt her is univerſal: nor is a miſcarriage even forgotten which was preceded by pretenſions to ſuperior ſtrictneſs. In any caſe, ſhe is a diſ-

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agreeable creature, whom none can love, and whom moſt will ſhun. How juſt the words of an elegant writer on this ſubject.

" Virtue is amiable, mild, ſerene;
" Without all beauty, and all peace with-
" in:
" The honour of a Prude is rage and ſtorm;
" 'Tis uglineſs in its moſt frightful form."

Should ſuch a woman live to grow old in the ſingle ſtate, ſhe will be regarded with a mixture of hatred and contempt. When I ſay this, every one will recollect the imputation which has been ſo frequently brought againſt unmarried females at that age. It is an unpleaſant idea: The inference is plain: Let it be your care now to lay in ſuch a ſtore of good humour and Chriſtian Meekneſs, as mingling with other agreeable acquiſitions, may prevent the advance of life from ſpoiling your cheerfulneſs, or robbing you of that benignity which communicates a grace to every condition, and of that conſequence which youth and beauty alone cannot preſerve. Eſtabliſh

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it betimes as a certain maxim, that to be married is neither the one, nor the chief thing needful. Are all in that ſtate happy! Or muſt ſhe be neceſſarily unhappy, who is not in that ſtate? May not a ſingle woman be wiſe and virtuous? and if wiſe and virtuous, will ſhe not be contented? and if contented, is ſhe not happy in the beſt ſenſe, as much ſo as can be expected in the mixed and variable lot of mortals? Is there any thing wrong in this reaſoning! If it is right now, will it not be right ten, fifteen, twenty years hence? And, in the mean while, do not you ſee women in the ſituation ſuppoſed, who from the goodneſs of their temper, breeding, and underſtanding, are objects of tender regard; a regard ſo much the more valuable, that it is entertained by the worthieſt of her acquaintance, that it is no longer a tribute levied by the power of beauty, or aided by the influence of cuſtom, but the pure reward of genuine merit; a merit tried by time, and matured by reflection?

But, do you imagine, that thoſe only are diſregarded and avoided who are peeviſh, fretful, or ſuſpicious from age? Depend upon it that ſuch diſpoſitions are always diſguſting, were ſhe that indulges them blooming as the ſpring, or beautiful as the day. No heart was ever won by diſdain; no lover was ever kept by coldneſs. A man whom the extravagance of his paſſion has weakened, may ſubmit for a while to the petulant airs, and even inſolent treatment, of a female that is handſome and young. Nay, ſuch is the debility ſometimes produced by this paſſion in men of little ſpirit or low underſtanding, that bad uſage, blended with fits of kindneſs, ſhall actually make them doat the more. But, what ſhall we ſay of that woman, who finding a man in her power, ſports with his heart, and to ſhow her dominion plays the tyrant? Alas! ſhe knows not that true greatneſs conſiſts in generoſity, that a graceful compliance is inexpreſſibly pleaſing, and that a man of worth may be for ever obliged by a noble frankneſs. She forgets too how ſoon an immoderate fondneſs is cured by connubial

bial familiarity, and what ſevere revenge may be taken after marriage by him whom ſhe treated ill before it, were he diſpoſed to make retaliation.

But you want to maintain your importance; and why not? Would you do it in the moſt effectual manner? Worth and underſtanding are the proper means. Haughtineſs is always little, violence impotent, and peeviſhneſs the infirmity of a child. Worth and underſtanding confer a conſequence that is ſeldom in danger of being deſpiſed. She who ſhows a juſt ſenſe of what belongs to her as a Woman, and as a Chriſtian, will engage reſpect without ſeeking to command it. From her, a word, a look expreſſive of virtuous diſdain or pious indignation, will daſh the boldeſt offender, if not uncommonly obdurate indeed. Nor can ſhe probably be often obliged to bear the company of a wretch, who is proof againſt the lightning of excellence provoked. Be aſſured, on the other ſide, that good nature well placed will never leſſen your value.

Look up, my fair ones, to the Firſt Lady of this land, and learn affability: learn to know, that, however grandeur may ſecure external reverence, it is goodneſs only that inſpires heart-felt eſteem; that Royalty itſelf derives luſtre from Meekneſs; and that the higheſt prerogative of rank is the power of imparting felicity more widely. Happy prince! thus to have found a companion, by whoſe cheerful temper and gentle manners the cares of government are ſoftened, and that ſatisfaction is enjoyed at home, which the ſplendor of a crown cannot confer. Illuſtrious pair! live long, bleſſed in each other and in your children, bright examples of nuptial ſanctity, parental affection and domeſtic joy.—The perſonage I ſpeak of ſeems indeed ſo thoroughly good, ſo naturally obliging, that I cannot doubt but ſhe would have proved ſuch in any ſtation. But certain it is, that from thoſe who are placed in the higher walks of life, a little condeſcenſion, a little favour, gives great delight. Is it not wonderful that women of birth and fortune

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ſhould not pleaſe more generally, when they might pleaſe at ſo cheap a rate?

But not to dwell on thoſe diſtinctions; what man is not charmed with an amiable courteouſneſs in any young woman, eſpecially if otherwiſe attractive! Even common civility is grateful. But would you be reſiſtleſs! Acquire a habit of fixed attention. It is a ſort of ſilent flattery truly exquiſite, and withal perfectly innocent. To the moſt attentive perſon in company you may obſerve the converſation almoſt always directed; while by interruption, liſtleſſneſs, or a vacant look in thoſe that are preſent, every creature that offers to ſpeak is ſure to be mortified. As a ſmall degree of knowledge entertains in a woman; ſo from a woman, though for a different reaſon, a ſmall expreſſion of kindneſs delights, particularly if ſhe has beauty. But, in truth, without uttering a word, ſhe has in her power by this ſingle mark of good breeding to captivate more than I can tell. In ſhort, the liſtening to the perſon who ſpeaks, with a recollected, mild and ſteady aſpect, which

nothing frivolous can divert, is perhaps the moſt valuable ſecret in the whole ſcience of genuine politeneſs. From an agreeable young woman to an intelligent man it is incredibly ſoothing.

If to your natural ſoftneſs you join that Chriſtian meekneſs, which I now preach; both together will not fail, with the aſſiſtance of proper reflexion and friendly advice, to accompliſh you in the beſt and trueſt kind of breeding. You will not be in danger of putting yourſelves forward in company, of contradicting bluntly, of aſſerting poſitively, of debating obſtinately, of affecting a ſuperiority to any preſent, of engroſſing the diſcourſe, of liſtening to yourſelves with apparent ſatisfaction, of neglecting what is advanced by others, or of interrupting them without neceſſity.

When theſe are not the effects of mere youthful folly, and even then they are diſpleaſing, it is plain, they proceed chiefly from pride and vanity. But, we ſaid before, that meekneſs is nearly allied to humility, and

and mightily aſſiſted by it. If you be truly humble, you will manifeſt a noble forgetfulneſs of yourſelves, with a becoming reſpect for others; a diffidence of your own ſentiments, with a deference to theirs in doubtful points, or in ſuch as they are entitled to know better; a readineſs to learn of every one, with a diſpoſition to give every one an opportunity of appearing with advantage, and thus to make all happy in their turn. Where the prevailing modes happen to be innocent, you will not affect to diſplay the refinement of your taſte, or the ſtrictneſs of your principles, by a ſcrupulous ſingularity, or a ſaucy contempt of the opinions and manners of others. Nor will thoſe conteſts and differences about precedency, form and faſhion, which inflame ſo many of your ſex, ever intereſt minds that have learnt the dignity of yielding, and the littleneſs of pride. In a word, the moſt important branches of Chriſtian breeding you will practiſe with eaſe and pleaſure from an internal principle. A meek deportment is the natural and ſpontaneous growth of a lowly mind. Politeneſs in you

you will be the offspring of the heart. How much preferable to that ſpecious, but hollow complaiſance, ſtudied by the faſhionable and the falſe; which conſiſts in an artful diſguiſing of their own paſſions, and a flattering application to thoſe of others, in a ſupple framing of the face to all occaſions, in profeſſing the greateſt reſpect without feeling the leaſt, and in hiding very often the worſt deſigns under the ſmile of familiarity and the ſhow of friendſhip?

I uſed the phraſe Chriſtian Breeding; that kind of courteſy, which I point out, being expreſsly enjoined by one of the writers of the New Teſtament. Perhaps you think of St Paul, that accompliſhed Apoſtle, who himſelf became all things to all men, that he might gain ſome. Such a precept might have been readily ſuggeſted by his early education in a ſeat of learning, and would have come very naturally from the hand that drew ſo divine a picture of Charity, the parent of Meekneſs. But the fact is, that the precept in queſtion fell from the pen of an illiterate man, bred to the

the roughest of all employments. It was St Peter, the inspired fisherman, that said, "Be courteous:"—to intimate that the religion which he had lately learnt from the meek and lowly Jesus, was able to soften the keenest, and subdue the hotest temper, and even give gentleness to one trained amongst winds and waves.

What strangers to the spirit of the Gospel must those women be, who have never controuled their own humours; whose looks are contempt, and whose words are arrogance; whose general demeanour, unless when they are propitiated by adulation, or soothed by submission, is big with insolence and scorn! How shall we express our horror at those female furies, that, lost to decency and every mild feeling of their sex, can abandon themselves to "all bitterness, "and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and "evil speaking, and all malice!" "It is "better," says Solomon, "to dwell in a "corner of the house-top, than with a "brawling woman in a wide house;" he might have added, or in a magnificent palace.

lace. In ſo doing, he would have probably ſpoken from experience; ſince it may be preſumed that ſome of thoſe eaſtern ladies, who had by their beauty enſlaved the unhappy monarch, were willing now and then by their tongues to convince him of their prerogative. The ſaying of the Son of Sirach, on the ſame ſubject, is yet ſtronger, as well as more ironical. "A "loud crying woman," ſays he, "and a "ſcold, ſhould be ſought out to drive a-"way the enemy." That ſpirited writer ſatirizes the female vices in general, with great freedom; but there is ſcarce any of them, which he more frequently or more ſeverely expoſes, than this of unquietneſs and ill temper.

When a woman of ſuch diſpoſitions enters into the nuptial ſtate, what wretchedneſs can equal his to whoſe lot ſhe falls? To be tied for life to a being, whom neither reaſon can convince, nor patience win, nor any thing conquer but main force; a domeſtic plague, a boſom-fiend, from whom only her death or his own can deliver him

—myſterious

—myſterious Providence! who can unfold the reaſons of thy procedure, when ſuch is the portion of a good man; who, mild himſelf and amiable, would have given and received peculiar felicity, had he been connected with ſome gentle female?

But let it be remembered, that violence is not neceſſary to conſtitute ill temper. Obſtinacy alone will do it. Let me conjure you, by all that is dear and lovely, to guard againſt that. Be aſſured there is not a man living, whoſe affection it does not chill, let him be otherwiſe ever ſo warm an admirer. There may be thoſe who, during the ſhort reign of Beauty, will ſupport it. But that being over, and the faſcination of appetite diſſolved, a diſputatious, perverſe, and ſtubborn female, will always offend; and, where there is any manhood left, will often provoke to a dangerous degree. In the mean time, every one who is not in love will be diſguſted; nor can any charm of underſtanding, or of perſon, compenſate the want of ſoft compliance, and meek ſubmiſſion, in a woman. Theſe the men

are

are taught by nature, by education and by cuſtom, to conſider as your duty, and their right; neither will they be eaſily brought to diſpenſe with it. Some of them you may ſubdue; but you can perſuade none of them into a different ſyſtem. If yet, after all, you will place your glory in deſpotic rule inſtead of kind attraction, chooſing rather to tyrannize over daſtardly ſlaves under the form of huſbands, than to influence thoſe huſbands as tender friends, what can we ſay, but that we pity them much, and you more? For the idea of a little paltry power aſſumed without title, and exerciſed without diſcretion, to give up the worthieſt triumphs of your ſex, how mean and how miſerable!

In the paſſage from which we have taken our text, the Apoſtle exhorts Chriſtian Women to be in ſubjection to their own huſbands; adding, as a motive which deſerved their conſideration, "that if any o-"bey not the word, they alſo without the "word may be won by the converſation of "the wives, while they behold your chaſte converſation

" converſation coupled with fear;" and ſo he goes on to recommend that meek and quiet ſpirit, which ought to be their principal ornament. With relation to the particular caſe by him ſuppoſed, his meaning evidently is, that thoſe his female diſciples might, by a pious and exact deportment, full of ſweetneſs and moderation, gain their huſbands over to a religion which they had not yet embraced, but which they would be no longer able to reſiſt, when they beheld and experienced its happy effects on the tempers and manners of their wives. To every excellent woman, that in this way has been inſtrumental to ſave a ſoul from death, we may addreſs, though in a lower ſenſe, thoſe words which were ſpoken by Gabriel to the Virgin Mary on a great occaſion, " Hail, thou " that art highly favoured, the Lord is with " thee: bleſſed art thou among women."

I cannot do juſtice to this part of my argument without remarking, that there is reaſon to fear much of the worthleſſneſs of many married men, as well as much of the unhappineſs both of them and their part-

ners, muſt be imputed to the Turbulent Paſſions or Uncomplying Humours of the latter. Such is the fameneſs of the matrimonial ſtate on one hand, ſuch its cares on the other; and, it is but fair to add, ſuch the indiſpoſition of numbers of men to be long delighted; that, to preſerve the attachment of a huſband unimpaired, the utmoſt attention and the mildeſt complacence are commonly requiſite on the ſide of the woman.

"Ev'n in the happieſt choice, where fav'ring
"heav'n
"Has equal love and eaſy fortune given,
"Think not, the huſband gain'd, that all is
"done;
"The prize of happineſs muſt ſtill be won;
"And oft, the careleſs find it to their coſt,
"The lover in the huſband may be loſt:
"The Graces might alone his heart allure;
"They and the Virtues meeting muſt ſe-
"cure."

I am aſtoniſhed at the folly of many women, who are ſtill reproaching men for leaving

leaving them alone, for preferring this or that company to theirs, for treating them with this and the other mark of diſregard or in difference; when, to ſpeak the truth, they have themſelves in a great meaſure to blame. Not that I would juſtify the men in any thing wrong on their part. But had you behaved to them with a more reſpectful obſervance, and a more equal tenderneſs; ſtudying their humours, overlooking their miſtakes, ſubmitting to their opinions in matters indifferent, paſſing by little inſtances of unevenneſs, caprice, or paſſion, giving ſoft anſwers to haſty words, complaining as ſeldom as poſſible, and making it your daily care to relieve their anxieties, and prevent their wiſhes, to enliven the hour of dulneſs, and call up the ideas of felicity? had you purſued this conduct, I doubt not but you would have maintained and even encreaſed their eſteem, ſo far as to have ſecured every degree of influence that could conduce to their virtue, or your mutual ſatisfaction: and your houſe might at this day have been the abode of domeſtic bliſs.

There may, it is true, be ſome huſbands whom no goodneſs can impreſs. We owned it before: but ſtill we have ground to believe, that of men who would have turned out better, had they met with diſcreet and obliging women, multitudes have been loſt by the inattention and neglect, as well as not a few by the impertinence and perverſeneſs of their wives. Little do many of you think how eaſily the heart may be alienated. A generous readineſs to make every kind allowance for what may be amiſs in others, is perhaps the rareſt quality in the world; it is, however, one of the moſt neceſſary, in the ſeveral connexions of ſociety, but eſpecially in the neareſt of all connexions. And yet how few huſbands, comparatively ſpeaking, have the good nature to exerciſe it towards the companions of their lives! How ſoon after marriage does it often happen, that every error is magnified into a fault, every fault into a vice, and often a ſingle look is conſtrued into I know not what enormity! One great ſource of this miſery is, that moſt men expect too much from the woman they

they marry, expect to be always received with ſmiles, and cheriſhed by endearments; forgetting that they do not always deſerve them; that thoſe women are like themſelves imperfect; that even the beſt temper will be hurt by circumſtances; and that the brighteſt ſky cannot for ever remain unclouded. But, notwithſtanding all this, it continues true, that women might often do much more to pleaſe. Their dropping to the huſband, as we have frequently ſeen, thoſe engaging manners which they practiſed on the lover, is impiety and diſtraction at the ſame inſtant; as if the ſolemn vows they made at the altar were words of courſe, and their only concern was to be married, not to be happy, or to gain a heart, not to keep it. They are apt alſo to forget in their turn, that the complacence and obſequiouſneſs of courtſhip ſeldom extend into wedlock; that the raptures of a common paſſion are neceſſarily ſhort; that an attachment without tenderneſs, or at moſt an affection with delicacy, is as much as can be hoped from the ordinary run of huſbands;

and that to preſerve even this requires both vigilance and gentleneſs.

But that vigilance which is forced will be frequently ſuſpended; and that gentleneſs which is put on will be always precarious. Therefore, we wiſh you to acquire early the habits of ſelf-controul, and to cultivate from principle a meek and quiet ſpirit. This you will do with ſucceſs, if imploring and depending on the grace of God, you make conſcience of curbing betimes the iraſcible paſſions of nature, of ſubmitting calmly to the daily mortifications of life, and generouſly yielding to thoſe about you, and particularly of condeſcending to perſons of low eſtate.

I have never ſeen a woman eminent for the laſt of theſe qualities, who was not excellent in many other ways. Reſpect to ſuperiors may be enforced by fear, or prompted by intereſt; and is, therefore, no demonſtrative proof of a good heart. But habitual mildneſs to thoſe of inferior rank, is one of its ſureſt indications. That young

lady

lady cannot have a bad mind, who readily enters into the diſtreſſes, and affectionately contributes to the felicity, of thoſe whom Providence has placed beneath her. In reality, there is no ſuch diſcovery of your tempers as your treatment of domeſtics. She is always the worthieſt character who behaves beſt at home, and is moſt liked by the ſervants. They are the trueſt judges of a woman's diſpoſitions, becauſe to them diſguiſe is laid aſide, and they ſee her in all lights. An unaffected propenſion to uſe them well, without partiality and without caprice, argues a confirmed benevolence. Thoſe who uſe them otherwiſe, will urge indeed their mercenary ſpirit, their want of gratitude, their want of worth; and ſuch complaints may in many inſtances be too well founded. But Humanity is noble, and will riſe above little conſiderations; Chriſtianity is divine, and will not be overcome of evil, but will overcome evil with good. A faithful ſervant is a treaſure, entitled to every poſſible mark of regard; and ſome ſuch there certainly are in this country. But, it muſt be confeſſed,

feſſed, the generality of that claſs are often highly provoking: they are ever ready to corrupt one another; and there can be little attachment where there is no principle. Nevertheleſs, I am perſuaded, that treating them with tenderneſs when ſick, and with gentleneſs at other times, without making them confidants, would, joined to a wiſe and pious example, go far to gain and reform many of them. At any rate, condeſcenſion and generoſity to thoſe of a lower ſtation, will always give ſatisfaction to that mind in which there is real ſuperiority.

Your behaving handſomely to your friends, and courteouſly to all with whom you converſe, though not ſo certainly characteriſtic of the virtue I paint, will yet be a natural and agreeable effect of it. Meekneſs is like the light, which ſpreads itſelf every where; though, like the light too, it pleaſes moſt where it is leaſt looked for. To carry on the reſemblance; like that it will be ſometimes obſcured, but like that alſo, we cannot bear its being long abſent.

Starts

Starts of petulance may be forgiven to proſperity; fits of fretfulneſs are natural to affliction; but what can be pleaded for harbouring a Paſſionate or a Peeviſh Temper, eaſily provoked and hardly to be pacified?

When I have ſeen a woman in a rage, I have always wiſhed for a mirror at hand to ſhow her to herſelf. How would ſhe have ſtarted back from her own image, if not an abſolute Demon! To thoſe of ſuch a ſtamp I have nothing to ſay but this, that a place awaits them where their rage will have its full ſcope for ever. But ſome are of a calmer ſtrain, ſour, ſplenetic and ſullen; not leſs unchriſtian, or leſs unfemale than the others, and on one account much worſe. In thoſe the ſtorm breaks and clears; in theſe all is ſettled gloom, that admits no ſun-ſhine, that preſents no proſpect of the cheerful kind. For vulgar and unenlightened ſpirits, thus continually overcaſt, there may be ſome excuſe, from the want of better inſtruction, that might have helped to correct their natural infelicity of temper. But what ſhall be ſaid for habitual

habitual rancour, deep reſentment, and cool malignity in thoſe women who, together with underſtandings originally good, (for ſome ſuch there are) have enjoyed the advantages of books and converſation, of elegant breeding and knowledge of the world? In truth, their heads ſeem to have ſtarved their hearts; and the talents they poſſeſs ſerve only to render them completer devils.

It is a ſtrange miſtake of many who think, that provided they do not indulge to one particular paſſion, they may give a looſe to all the reſt: as if a woman could offend only by incontinence; or, as if her not committing a ſin to which, perhaps, from the coldneſs of her complexion ſhe had no propenſity, or from which ſhe is reſtrained by the dread of immediate infamy and ruin, would atone for the commiſſion of others without number; for vanity and arrogance, for ſelfiſhneſs and envy; for ſuſpicion and revenge, for unbounded cenſoriouſneſs, or the blackeſt malice. I am ſufficiently aware that Pride may not comprehend

bend the remark, and that Uncharitableneſs may not forgive it: but no candid hearer will miſtake me when I ſay, that, however ſcandalous and however deſtructive the luſts of the fleſh may be, thoſe of the mind are yet more heinous, being the proper and peculiar image of the worſt and wickedeſt being in the univerſe; in one word, they are infernal.

Our Maſter underſtood the diſtinction well, and was not afraid to ſhow that he underſtood it. In the capacity of a teacher he converſed freely with publicans and ſinners; he treated them tenderly: he came not, as he himſelf ſaid, "to call the righ-"teous but ſinners to repentance." What gentleneſs did he not diſplay to the poor creature taken in adultery! What forgiveneſs of the well-known female penitent, who but a little before had been plunged in diſorder and ſhame! Such he declared ſhould enter into the kingdom of heaven more readily than the Scribes and Phariſees, in ſpite of all their adulations and prayers, their frequent faſtings and ſpeci-

ous

ous demeanour; a proud, ſelf-juſtifying, and moſt unmerciful ſet of men, whom he ſcrupled not, for theſe reaſons, to pronounce "the children of the devil." Let me perſuade you, from the example of your Saviour, to learn pity towards ſuch as are gone aſtray. How ungracious in women not to ſhew mercy to women! Let me prevail with you never to expreſs a ſupercilious contempt, or unforgiving ſeverity, on the ſubject of thoſe hapleſs beings, whoſe miſery pleads for commiſeration yet louder than their crimes call for cenſure. Which of you can be ſure that you would not have yielded to the ſame temptations which overcame them? Where are thoſe perfect characters that can anſwer for their own ſtability? Who made you to differ from the wretchedeſt of human kind? Believe me, Chriſtians, the moſt genuine virtue is always the moſt humble and the moſt charitable.—Merciful heaven, may the beſt gifts of thy providence, and the ſweeteſt influences of thy grace, deſcend evermore on that bleſſed Eſtabliſhment, which has opened a ſanctuary for wretched females,

weary

weary of vice and willing to reform. May all its benefactors obtain mercy in the day of the Lord. What ſuperior honour does ſuch an eſtabliſhment, with its ſiſter inſtitution, that happy Aſylum for the helpleſs young creatures of your ſex who are yet uncorrupted, reflect on this nation! They are truly the moſt diſtinguiſhing glory of Britain; the faireſt flowers, if I may ſo ſay, in all the garland of Engliſh humanity.

But, let me recommend to you, Candour with regard to your ſex in general, as well as compaſſion towards the unhappy part of it. Ah, my fair clients, what ſhall we ſay in your behalf to thoſe men who are always telling us of your ill-natured remarks, or illiberal inſinuations to the diſadvantage of one another? Such as reſign themſelves, without controul, to this accurſed paſſion, we give up at once with indignation and abhorrence. Thoſe wilful and deliberate deſtroyers of reputation are of their "father devil, who was," an accuſer, and "a murderer from the beginning;" nor, while they do his works, will it avail them

aught, though, like him, they could in other reſpects "transform themſelves into "angels of light." No luſtre of beauty, no brilliancy of underſtanding can, even among the warmeſt friends of the ſex, make compenſation for the ſpirit of cenſoriouſneſs in a female. For my own part, I conſider good nature and candid ſentiments as ſo peculiarly indiſpenſable in every woman, that, when I want to eſtimate the character of any young lady, I take the firſt opportunity of commending highly ſome perſon of her own ſex, and about her own age, but rather younger, whom ſhe knows, and who is deſervedly a favourite with the men. If without heſitation, reſerve, or a ſingle But, if with apparent pleaſure and cordiality ſhe joins in the praiſe; I am willing from that moment to form a favourable opinion of her heart. I may be miſtaken: it may be all artifice; but, for the moſt part, I think not. If on the contrary——— But I need not expreſs the reſt. Inform us, ye ſtudents of human nature, what it is in the female mind that, without the reſtraints of ſuperior worth, inclines it ſo ſtrongly to the

love

love of ſcandal? I am diſpoſed to hope, that, beſide the competitions formerly explained, it may be often owing to the acrimony produced by diſappointment, and often to the habits contracted by aſſociating with thoſe who, having no fund of entertainment in themſelves, are forced to ſeek it at the expenſe of others. Be it owing however, to what it will, one thing is certain, that a proneneſs to indulge it is always deteſtable; as, on the other hand, ſhe who has the generoſity to approve moſt, will have always the ſatisfaction of being moſt approved; and for the beſt of qualities, an amiable temper.—No, my fair ones, nothing can make amends for the want of that. It is like wiſdom; "It cannot be "valued with the gold of Ophir, with the "precious onyx or the ſapphire. The gold "and the cryſtal cannot equal it; and the "exchange of it ſhall not be for jewels of "fine gold. No mention ſhall be made "of coral or of pearls: for the price of it "is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia "ſhall not equal it." Preſerve it, dearly beloved, and cheriſh it for ever.

Let "the law of kindneſs," be in your tongue. "A froward mouth and perverſe "lips put far from you." Guard againſt every word, and againſt every hint that would give pain unneceſſarily to any creature. Beware of miſtaken pertneſs for vivacity, or petulance for ſpirit. Tremble at the thought of ſacrificing friendſhip to a jeſt. Indulge, in no caſe, a propenſity to contradiction, or the itch of criticiſm. Be not haſty to draw characters, in general companies eſpecially. Whenever you do, be ſure to touch on what is praiſe-worthy: ſomething praiſe-worthy there is in every character. Over what is culpable throw the veil of charity as often as you can. As well in this as in other reſpects, "charity "ſhall hide a multitude of ſins." When the abſent are condemned, juſtify their conduct, if poſſible; extenuate it, if not: ſome circumſtance of extenuation may be almoſt always found. If, in your judgment of human actions, you moſt frequently err, let it ever be on the favourable ſide; and remember, that one of a noble nature had much rather be thought humane than witty, ſimple than ſevere.

ſevere. Show yourſelves pleaſed, as often as you really are ſo; and you will ſeldom fail of pleaſing. Join to all the reſt, the magnanimity of applauding freely in other women that beauty, and thoſe accompliſhments, which you yourſelves may chance not to poſſeſs, or to poſſeſs only in an inferior degree.——How lovely and great will you appear by an unaffected attention to ſuch maxims! The ſparkling of wit, or the ſplendor of fortune in others, may amuſe and dazzle for a time; but you ſhall ſecure ſolid and laſting eſteem. Your ſociety will be ſought as eaſy and ſafe; your friendſhip will be prized, as ſincere and affectionate; in your tender boſoms your acquaintance will long to repoſe their hearts; and from your ſympathetic manner of entering into their concerns, they will receive conſolation.

But, is there no danger of ſinking into inſipidity, by ſuch a behaviour? Not the leaſt: if it is accompanied with thoſe other qualities which women ought to cultivate. And what ſhould hinder the ſofteſt ſpirit of your ſex from acquiring, if ſhe will, any

one virtue or accompliſhment proportionate to her capacity? It is poſſible, indeed, that ſuch a caſt of mind may be attended with leſs reſolution in difficulties, with leſs endurance of affliction, with leſs acuteneſs of wit, or leſs force of underſtanding; but by due pains taken with herſelf, a woman of this ſort will, I apprehend, beyond all others, improve into that form of character which we would willingly convince you is the moſt beautiful in a female. There are, I will acknowledge, now and then in ſome of a different mould, certain little caprices, or lively ſallies and ſtarts of humour, that are not unpleaſing on particular occcaſions. But then they require to be bound by decency, and blended with ſenſe; nor muſt the great principles of good affection be ever forgotten.

Among the many other advantages reſulting from female meekneſs, I muſt not omit to mention how much it will conduce to Perſonal Attraction. As it commonly implies calm paſſions, ſo it naturally produces, or happily promotes, that ſerene manner

ner which is always engaging, (a flutter never is) and which, meeting a ſentimental mind refines very readily into a gracefulneſs of mein, more real than any that is acquired in gay aſſemblies, and to an obſervant eye much more alluring. Imagine a circle of handſome young women, where one is diſtinguiſhed above the reſt by a flowing, yet compoſed affability; by a meek look, and modeſt carriage, in which there appears no conſciouſneſs of beauty, no return upon herſelf, no ſtudy to become the object of the company, no viſible attention to her dreſs or perſon, but a recollected air, and ſteady regard to thoſe about her; what ſuperior pleaſure and reſpect will her preſence neceſſarily inſpire: Suppoſe her, if you will, entirely ſilent, from a diſpoſition to give place to others who may ſeem more deſirous of talking; will not her very ſilence intereſt? But when, on finding room left for her ſhare in the diſcourſe, ſhe ſpeaks with that ſweetneſs of voice which often accompanies mild affections, expreſſing in gentle unſtudied accents ſuch ſentiments as are worthy of herſelf; I leave you

to

to gueſs the effect on every ſuſceptible by-ſtander. Alas! my friends, what is all the momentary luſtre you are continually labouring to give thoſe lips, compared with the permanent beauties of a lovely mind, breathing from them in agreeable converſation? Let me add, where the grace of meekneſs has the ſoul in full poſſeſſion, it will be often ſeen beaming in the eyes with a bland ſenſibility, and ſporting on the countenance in placid ſmiles, more ſoft than the ſofteſt glow of a ſummer evening; eſpecially, when at any time the mind is exalted into livelier emotions of benignity and joy. Or once more let us ſuppoſe, that affliction has given to ſuch a face, a caſt of ſolemnity and languor; it will ſtill retain a kind of ſober charm that is inexpreſſibly affecting. In truth, beauty never touches the heart ſo deeply, as when with a ſweet unreluctant ſurrender it ſeems ready to faint under the ſhock of misfortune, or the load of ſorrow. But, to proceed,

I would take the liberty to obſerve, that Chriſtian meekneſs will be of particular uſe

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to prevent the Artful Behaviour ſo frequently complained of in women, and in many inſtances ſo juſtly. The complaint, I confeſs, comes with an ill grace from thoſe men who daily ſtudy it is, in one ſhape or another, to impoſe on the ſex; nor can I doubt but many of the latter would have more ſincerity, if the others had leſs deſign. They probably think themſelves juſtified in baffling art by art; and from the ſcience of defence and reſiſtance, they are too apt to paſs to that of ſtratagem and attack. It is, indeed, marvellous to what lengths many of them carry it, till they become mere compoſitions of hypocriſy; where each ingenuous feeling is loſt, and every word, look, motion and minute proceeding, is a lie. Whether it be, that Nature has given them more ſubtilty, or that education has taught them more diſguiſe, or that their condition affords them greater leiſure to think of ſuch things, or that they are willing to make up in wiles what they want in ſtrength; whether it be owing to one, or to all of theſe cauſes, I know not: but the fact is this, that there are very few men

able

able to contend with a cunning woman in her own way.

Nevertheleſs, I muſt inform ſuch diſſemblers, that cunning is not true ability; it is at beſt but left-handed wiſdom; it carries with it an obliquity, and an impotence, that a noble mind will, and that a capable one, ought to deſpiſe. I need not ſay, that it is diametrically oppoſite to the ſimplicity of the Goſpel which admits our being "wiſe as ſerpents" only ſo far as is conſiſtent with our being "harmleſs as "doves." The maxims of a virtuous prudence are comprehenſive; and ſhe who has learned, with an humble reliance on heaven's direction, to apply them as occaſion requires, will never want the aſſiſtance of artifice. In ſhort, artifice is but a feeble auxiliary, very often, and almoſt conſtantly betraying thoſe that truſt to it. Fond prepoſſeſſion, or unſuſpecting candour, may no doubt, be eaſily deceived by female diſguiſe; but it is difficult to act a part long. Diſſimulation will ſometimes let fall the maſk; and he has not the ſpirit

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of a man, who does not abhor and ſcorn the detected impoſtor. Mean while, what a laborious taſk is her's! How anxious, ignoble, and wretched! From this, my fair diſciples, native goodneſs and Chriſtian meekneſs will ſave you. By being what you ought to appear, you will be under no temptation of appearing what you are not. An obliging converſation, and ſoft deportment, will proceed from you freely as from a living fountain. Having no bad paſſions to conceal, your thoughts and manners will be tranſparent. Truth will be your prompter, while Diſcretion is your guard. In you, Virtue will wear her mildeſt aſpect, without conſtraint, and without ſtudy. The baſeneſs and barbarity of inviting or encouraging addreſſes, which you mean not in the end to accept, you will avoid and deteſt. A proffered heart you will refuſe with civility and gratitude, where you cannot return your own; or where you can and ought, you will accept with generoſity and affection. Let me add, upon the whole, that as every mode of diſſimulation is equally injudicious and

and unbecoming, ſo ſhe will always be the moſt attractive, while ſhe is the only honourable character, who cultivates genuine worth inſtead of artificial forms, and practices undiſſembled ſweetneſs inſtead of fictitious courteſy.

Such a one was Iſabella, the darling of all who knew her. She lived, indeed, where Virtue was not eclipſed by fortune, and where depravity of manners did not prevent the admiration of excellence. Her mind was very early accompliſhed; it was that of a woman, when ſhe was yet but a child. It ſhone in her face with a generous warmth, and at the ſame time a calm intelligence, ſeldom ſeen in a countenance ſo young; it produced in her whole deportment a mixture of ſoftneſs and dignity, which ſhe alone did not perceive. In company, the merits of others, not her own, engaged all her attention. She was never pert. Her deffidence kept her too frequently ſilent: when ſhe ſpoke, it was with ſweet ſimplicity and ſmiling reſpect. Her voice was melody itſelf, without that

frivolous

frivolous whine which is often occaſioned by diſſembling, and often by affectation. Amongſt her intimate companions ſhe was ſprightly and playful: for them ſhe felt the enthuſiaſm of friendſhip. Her pen flowed in a ſtream of ſentiment alike tender and exalted; it was the intepreter of her heart. Every duty becoming her ſtation, and conſiſtent with her years, ſhe fulfilled from inſtinct ſanctified by piety! a piety, in which meekneſs ſtill preſided. Heaven beheld ſo gentle a ſpirit with complacence, and took her a way from the evil to come; took her to itſelf, in all the purity of untained virtue. She was ſeized on a ſudden: I then ſaw her: ſhe was no way alarmed. Young and beautiful, admired and happy, ſhe ſurrendered her ſoul with a placid reſignation; ſhe ſmiled in her laſt moments; the ſmile remained on her clay-cold viſage for ſome time after the informing mind was fled. She was lovely and pleaſant in her life, and in her death an object of univerſal and affectionate lamentation. Her little ſtory furniſhes a proof, that ſentiment and meekneſs

conjoined, are ſuperior to all other allurements; and that diſpoſitions at once mild and virtuous require neither diſguiſe nor heightening.

I preſume you know, that the language of inſpiration repreſents the internal character under the notion of a perſon or living form, which it ſtyles the Old or the New Man, according as the principles of ſin or of holineſs have the aſcendant. By the ſame figure of ſpeech, the inward graces and decorations of a Chriſtian are here termed "the hidden man of the heart, in "that which is not corruptible;" to contraſt them with that corporeal beauty, and thoſe external embelliſhments, which are immediately palpable to the ſenſes, and like them ſubject to decay and corruption. Thus it is that St Peter would call off your too anxious attention from inferior, outſide, and ſhort-lived attractions, whether original or aſſumed, to ſuch as are of ſupreme value, being in their nature ſpiritual and immortal. Nor does he ſimply reſt there, but farther recommends the latter

latter as highly Acceptable to your Maker, "even the ornament of a meek and "quiet ſpirit, which is in the ſight of God "of great price."

Such a ſpirit, indeed, bears a near reſemblance to his own moſt merciful and bleſſed attributes, to his well-beloved Son and our divinely benevolent Saviour, to thoſe good and happy creatures that conſtitute the angelic world, and to all the excellent ones of human kind, both on earth and in heaven, that belong to the ſame great family of love. Such a ſpirit proceeds directly from the common parent, and cannot but be pleaſing to its author. What ſays St James? "The wiſdom that is from "above is firſt pure, then peaceable, gen-"tle, and eaſy to be entreated, full of "mercy and good fruits." Such is the temper of Chriſtianity, and ſuch are its effects.

To cheriſh them in yourſelves let all the preceding conſiderations incite you; but above them all, be engaged by the divine

ambition of being approved by the Sovereign Judge and Rewarder of excellence. What can be added to ſuch an argument; or what can we offer upon it, that will be any way anſwerable to its dignity? To appear beautiful in the eye of God; to be beloved by the monarch of the univerſe; to be admitted, If I may uſe the phraſe, as ſo many fair and ſhining pillars into his temple below; while he contemplates each with a pleaſing aſpect, and purpoſes to remove them in due time to his ſanctuary on high, where they ſhall remain his everlaſting delight, as well as the never-ceaſing admiration of ſurrounding cherubims—— great Creator, what can equal ſuch exaltation and filicity? And can any of you my hearers, be ſo deſtitute of every nobler ſentiment as not to aſpire after privileges like theſe: Unmoved by ſuch ideas, can you turn away with impatience, and run to ſcenes of addreſs and ſhow with the ſame little inglorious paſſion as before; preferring to the approbation of the Eternal the ſlighteſt regards from the ſillieſt mortals? Go, thou ſenſeleſs creature, and

boaſt

boaſt of being admired by the butterflies of a day: See what they will do for thee, when he whoſe favour thou neglecteſt, and for ſuch things, ſhall cauſe thy "beauty "to conſume like a moth," and thy heart to ſink within thee like a ſtone. Imagination ſhudders at the thought of that day, when thou ſhalt enter, forlorn, forſaken and trembling, thoſe diſmal regions which the voice of adulation cannot reach, and nothing ſhall be heard but ſounds of reproach, blaſphemy and wo: where, ſtript of every ornament that now decks thy body, and ſtript of that body itſelf, thy mind muſt appear without ſhelter or covering, all deformed and ghaſtly, mangled with the wounds of deſpairing guilt, and diſtorted by the violence of envenomed paſſions, while demons ſhall mock at thy miſery. Save us, Almighty Redeemer, ſave theſe young people from a doom ſo dreadful!

Would you concur to prevent it? Begin with reſtraining the love of ornament; or rather, turn that dangerous affection into a

higher channel, and let it flow: it will then become ſafe, uſeful, noble. Here you will have ſcope for the largeſt fancy. To the adorning of the character we wiſh you to ſet no bounds. In dreſſing the ſoul for the company of ſaints, of angels, of God himſelf, you cannot employ too much thought or time. In ſtudying and cultivating, "the hidden man of the heart," you will every day diſcover new charms, that will improve with age, bloom in ſickneſs, live in death, ſurvive the deſolation of the grave, aſcend triumphant to the world of perfect beauty, and continue to brighten under the ſmile of heaven for ever. In a word, all the beſt beings in the creation, together with the Creator himſelf, concur in loving and honouring a beauteous mind.

Nor is this a diſtinction, for which you muſt contend with too many competitors. Carry the paſſion for dreſs almoſt ever ſo high, you will ſtill have the mortification to find ſome one or other out-ſhine you in taſte, or in magnificence; but the palm of wiſdom, you may bear away from the greater

greater part unenvied, if you will only allow them the ſuperiority of faſhion. Oh! that I knew how to awaken on this ſubject the ſpirit of ambition in thoſe who are ſo prone to indulge it on a thouſand others. Happy Preacher, couldſt thou behold thy hearers filled with emulation to excel one another, in all the modeſt graces and mild accompliſhments that can adorn their ſex! Happy Britain, were this the æra in which Religion, with her whole train of Virtues, might riſe into repute amongſt thy children; in which thy ſons might be "as plants "grown up in their youth," and thy "daughters as corner-ſtones poliſhed after "the ſimilitude of a palace!"

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CONCLUSION.

THE Preacher can readily ſuppoſe, that many things advanced on the ſubject of Women, in the courſe of theſe Sermons, will be deemed by the generality of his own ſex too ſoothing, while by the majority of yours many will be judged too ſevere; ſuch is the force of prejudice on both ſides. That he himſelf is quite impartial, it is impoſſible for him to be certain. He can only ſay, that he has honeſtly endeavoured, according to the beſt of his capacity, to hold the balance even. Throughout the whole, he had but one ſingle point to ſtudy; which was, to advance what he believed to be true, and what he hoped at the ſame time might be uſeful He knew, and conſidered, that he is accountable at an higher tribunal than any upon earth. If he has wiſhed to pleaſe, it was from a ſolicitude, "for your good "to edification." If he has happened to offend, it was without malignity or deſign. He ſhould be ſorry to be counted your enemy,

my, for telling you the truth. But his concern in that caſe would be for you, not for himſelf; he is ambitious of your approbation, but he is much more ſo of his own.

His happieſt days having been chiefly paſt in the converſation of women of worth and underſtanding, it is certain, that for ſuch he has ever entertained a peculiar eſteem. He pretends not, indeed, that even amongſt them he has found any jewel without a flaw. But notwithſtanding their imperfections, juſtice exacts from him this teſtimony, that, when they have in any tolerable degree approached to the ſtandard of what we have ſo often ſtyled Female Excellence, they have appeared to him, with a few exceptions in favour of the other ſex, by far the devouteſt worſhippers, the warmeſt friends, and the moſt ſentimental as well as entertaining companions. What he has principally to lament, is his meeting with ſo ſmall a number, who have had elevation enough to practiſe an entire ſimplicity of manners, ſenſe enough wholly to forget their perſons in the company of men, and meekneſs

meekneſs enough to be quite content, when not the objects of immediate attention.

If the Preacher has endeavoured, upon the principles of candour, to account for ſome paſſions in the ſex that ſeem at firſt ſight leſs innocent, or leſs excuſable; it was under the ſanction and impreſſion of that great evangelical law, "Judge not, "that ye be not judged. For with what "judgment ye judge, ye ſhall be judged: "and with what meaſure ye met, it ſhall "be meaſured to you again." If he has addreſſed thoſe young perſons who formed his audience, in a ſtyle of peculiar tenderneſs, the reaſon, in plain terms, was, becauſe he felt it; nor does he think, that either as a man or as a Preacher, he ought to ſuppreſs, if he could, an affection which Nature has implanted, and which, kept within proper bounds, Religion does not prohibit.

If he has attempted to inſinuate inſtruction under the ſmiles of complacence, or to enforce admonition with the fervors of friendſhip;

friendſhip; ſay, ye cenſors of the age, is he really to blame? Is an auſtere countenance the proper face of zeal, or a diſtant formality the genuine mark of holineſs? To diſguſt by rudeneſs, or to diſcourage by rigour—is that the way to win ſouls? Was it the way of the Apoſtles, or of their Maſter? Merciful Saviour! what words can paint thy benignity, into whoſe lips grace was poured, who didſt "not break "the bruiſed reed, nor quench the ſmoak-"ing flax," whoſe character was like that of thy Father, love? I touched before on the ſpirit that breathed in his teaching: let me juſt add here, that his parables, which made ſo great a part of it, were pointed to the imagination no leſs than to the heart; preſenting the ſtrongeſt pictures of life and nature, at the ſame time that by theſe very means they impreſſed the nobleſt leſſons of piety and truth. To ſpeak in general, will any one ſay that the ſeverity of cenſure muſt never be ſoftened, nor the awfulneſs of ſolemnity tempered; not even when the Preacher, has the Youthful and the Gay for his hearers? They ſurely are

ſtrangers

ſtrangers to true Wiſdom who ſuppoſe her monitions incompatible with cheerful images or joyful ideas; ſurely thoſe are unacquainted with the human mind, who hope to reform its errors without conciliating its affections, or think that the tutoring of terror alone will produce the love of goodneſs.

In ſome ſentiments which I have offered to your conſideration, I ſhould not be ſurpriſed, if I have been taxed with idle refinement. We live in an age, when whatever is held by the Few moſt ſolid and valuable, is by the Many derided as viſionary, or decried as inſignificant. In the preſent age an accompliſhed female is apt to be ſhunned under the notion of a Learned lady; and the Virtuous Woman of the Proverbs would be in danger of being ridiculed as a compoſition of affectation. In this age the ſubject of dreſs and ornament, I am ready to acknowledge, is better underſtood than formerly; but in theſe how often are modeſty, frugality, and ſimple elegance, given up to levity or faſhion, to vain competition or miſtaken appearance!

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In this age the ſtrictneſs of female decorum, and the retirings of female reſerve, muſt expect to be conſtrued into ignorance of the world, if not into hypocritical airs of female ſanctity. In this polite age, I had almoſt aſked, where is the man that believes any woman to be modeſt at heart; and where is the woman that dares to be ſuperior to the follies of her ſex? A paſſion exalted by generoſity, and refined by ſentiment, in which the man, not the equipage, was regarded, in which the higheſt gratifications of ſenſe were the loweſt objects of affection——ſuch a paſſion is now conſidered by the generality as romance. Such lovers might exiſt in the days of old, or poſſibly may be yet found in the obſcurity of retreat: but in the gay world, where all is trained with ſenſuality, and ſacrificed to ſhow, they would appear too ungenteel to be reſpectable, and too inſipid to be happy. Here, alas! how few have the fortitude to leave to their own hearts, the worth to cultivate the joys of friendſhip, or the ſoul to ſeek conjugal felicity in conjugal eſteem! Amidſt the hurry and diſſipation of diver-

ſions, the profligacy or inſignificance of play, the futility or frivolouſneſs of formal viſiting; what regard or what room is left for ſelf-poſſeſſion or mutual confidence, or rational converſation, or improving ſtudy, for the pleaſing cares of a family, or that amiable mixture of minds without which ſocial life is modiſh diſguiſe or mean indulgence? Is it neceſſary to add, how ſcanty a portion of time is now given to private devotion; how little the Sabbath is made a day of reſt from the toil of pleaſure or the tumult of paſſion; and to what banter from the licentious of both ſexes, ſhe is expoſed, who would fill up the duties of that day with ſerioufneſs, reverence and conſtancy? Let me only ſubjoin, that the modes of breeding now eſtabliſhed for young women are ſuch; that compoſure and ſoftneſs are hardly deemed conſiſtent; that a demeanour perfectly attentive is in hazard of paſſing for want of vivacity; and a temper thoroughly meek for want of ſpirit.

But

But, what are you to infer from all this? That you muſt "follow a multitude to do "evil," or relinquiſh Wiſdom, becauſe ſhe is renounced by fools? She ſtill continues "to be juſtified of her children;" and be aſſured, my dear auditory, that theſe very fools ſhall be forced one day to acknowledge her worth. A few ſhort years rolled away, and this gaudy ſcene will diſappear. Where are now many of the miſerable flutterers, that we have ſeen fret their hour on the ſtage of Vanity? Doctrine like this, They too once deſpiſed as idle refinement, or diſreliſhed as nauſeous dulneſs. Do ye imagine they are of the ſame mind ſtill? How, think ye, will it appear to yourſelves in the decrepitude of age, and on the bed of death? By what ſtandard ſhall you then wiſh to have regulated yourſelves; by that of reaſonable women and virtuous believers, or by the manners and maxims of a diſtracted and degenerate age?

Againſt the latter let me warn you, by every thing that is prudent and good, by

all that can promote the importance of your ſex, the reformation of ours, and the happineſs of both; let me warn you, in the name of your country, in the name of your poſterity, in the name of God! ſuffer not Folly to deceive or Flattery to abuſe you. The time cannot be very diſtant, at which beauty ſhall fade as a flower, by the courſe of nature: the period may be near at hand, when it ſhall ſhrink at once under the violence of diſeaſe. However you may try to forget it, life is all uncertain: and when thoſe eyes, now full of lucid ſpirit, ſhall ſink in darkneſs, when that complexion, now bright and blooming, ſhall die away into a livid hue, and men ſhall turn with horror from thoſe features which they behold at preſent with delight; what will the world avail you, or the world's applauſe? Death, I ſay, Death is no courtier; he will ſhow you to yourſelves as you really are, diveſted of every external decoration and ſkin-deep allurement. If deſtitute of mental acquiſitions and moral graces, the unfading luſtre of an enlightened ſoul, "the

"the hidden and incorruptible man of the "heart;" what will it avail you that you are now fair and flattered? The reputation of wit, the popularity of politeneſs, the profeſſion of piety itſelf, will in that conjuncture be alike ineffectual. It is only the retroſpect of capacity well employed, the conſciouſneſs of benevolence worthily exerted, and the principles of faith and hope poſſeſſing the mind, that will then ſupport and gladden it.

Where there is nothing but a picture of virtue, or a few ſhadowy qualities that may ſubſiſt without any real excellence, death will hide them for ever in the night of deſpair. The blackneſs of darkneſs will cloſe upon the naked and wandering ghoſt; while its loathſome remains are conſigned to oblivion and putrefaction in the priſon of the grave, with the proſpect of a worſe doom hereafter. But where there is a living image of true goodneſs begun in this ſtate, death will deliver it with ſafety into the finiſhing hand of Eternity. to be produced with

with every mark of honour in the open view of heaven; where its now mortal partner, reſcued from the diſhonours of the duſt, and brightened into the graces of eternal youth, ſhall rejoin it in triumph, to ſuffer the pang of ſeparation no more.—Everlaſting Jehovah, what a crown of joy will it confer upon the Preacher in that day, if this little ſervice ſhall be rewarded with the reflexion of having contributed to the ſalvation or improvement of any of theſe young perſons whom he now addreſſes! If ever thine ear was open to my cry, hear me, O Lord, hear me, in their behalf. What cannot thy Spirit perform, perform by the weakeſt hand? May that Spirit "ſeal them unto the day of redemption!" ——At that glorious period, may I meet you all amongſt "the redeemed of the "Lord;" happy to ſee you ſhining, with immortal ſplendor, in "the general "aſſembly and church of the firſt born;" tranſported to think, that I ſhall ſee you for ever; and joining in the gratulations of your fellow angels around the throne of God, when he ſhall in the ſight of all "clothe

"you

"you with the garments of ſalvation, and
"cover you with the robe of righteouſneſs,
"as a bridegroom is decked with orna-
"ments, and as a bride is adorned with
"her jewels." Amen.

FINIS.

BL